

COLLECTED POEMS

(1894-1940)



COLLECTED POEMS

(1894-1940)

of
JAMES H. COUSINS



KALÂKSHETRA
ADYAR, MADRAS, INDIA
MCMXL

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

KALĀKSHETRA (Sanskrit for The Sacred Home of Art), known also as The International Arts Centre, was established in 1935 by Srimati Rukmini Devi with the aim of fostering interest in the fine arts and art-crafts from the point of view both of idealistic creative expression and the beautifying of life. On the side of art-appreciation Kalākshetra is international, and seeks to make artists and art-lovers acquainted with the finest ideas, impulses and achievements of the creative spirit in humanity in all lands and eras. On the side of art-expression Kalākshetra concerns itself, for the time being, with India's genius. At its headquarters at Adyar, Madras, South India it hopes to gather together a representative selection of objects of world-art. In its workshops and studios and the associated school it is training young artists and artificers to follow the finest ideals and technique of the arts and crafts of India and to profit by true advances in art elsewhere.

Recognizing the value of book-production of an artistic order, Kalākshetra has added publication to its activities. It will give books to the world that are themselves works of art in presentation; and that in their substance are either concerned with the arts or are works of creative literature. The volume now presented is of the latter order, containing the life-work in poetry of one of the pioneers of the Irish literary revival of forty years ago, who, after a life in India, Japan and America, with visits to Europe, still, as *The Times Literary Supplement*, London, said of one of his recent books, "moves among immortal themes."

PREFACES

To *A WANDERING HARP, Selected Poems, 1932*

The poems here collected represent the expression of forty years of poetical aspiration: but not all of that expression; for certain whole books and certain poems have been omitted—partly because space, whatever illusoriness it admits to the scientist, masks itself as reality to the publisher, hence to the author; partly because, when judgment comes to Daniel, certain things, perhaps not valueless, but less valuable than others in a crush, have to go to the lions

Up to 1913, when I left Ireland—to become, as afterwards appeared, a world wanderer, gathering nomadic riches, but squandering the marketable possibilities of a settled abode—the vision and enthusiasm of the movement that came to be known as the Irish Literary Revival circumferenced my poetical life. Thereafter, that vision and enthusiasm became its centre, and circumferences learned not to matter. I ceased to be a citizen of my particular world—though that world had its own exquisite completeness—and was driven by the winds of destiny on the spiritual adventure of becoming, as fully as possible, a world polarized and orbited in a citizen.

The personalities and events of the Irish mythos, which was the deepest inspiration of the movement, had become to me the imaginative incarnations of powers and processes in the universe and myself. I felt that its vision was more ultimate than insight and more prophetic than foresight; and through its contemplation and embodiment in my early poems I aspired towards the capacity to see the significance of the insignificant and to feel the eternal in the temporal.

Thus I came to the realization through my own art that all art is the imposition of an inner order on an outer

disorder; and I have striven so to free my wandering harp and its player from the assumptions of the merely ancient and the intimidations of the merely contemporaneous that our song might in some degree be a translation of the music made by the passing wing of the seraph Salathiel.

To *A BARDIC PILGRIMAGE*, Second Selection, 1934

. . . Certain poems written before and during my twenties that were excluded from *A Wandering Harp* have not been included in this volume for certain reasons in addition to juvenility of craft or content. I learned from experience that there is a love and war of higher origin and import than that which the bards had sung, and which I had essayed to sing in the first imitative years of my poetical novitiate; a love that survives the passionate mendacity of youth, and a war of the spirit in which the victor resigns at least half of his chaplet to the vanquished; and I came to realize that such love and such war are the only subjects worthy of poetical celebration or remembrance.

Three decades have passed since the early days of the Irish literary and dramatic revival in which I received from poets who have taken their places among the masters of enduring song the keys to the mystery of creative art, and august initiation, both visible and invisible, into the hierophantic service of poetry. My life in the interval has been blessed by the friendship of some of the creative illuminati of three continents, and exalted by the recurrent airy or flaming touch of one or other of the Hierarchy of participants in the beautiful declaration of Truth or the truthful disclosure of Beauty, who partially unveil Their countenances to the purified and consecrated imagination.

To COLLECTED POEMS, 1940

I have taken the opportunity of the publication of this one-volume collection of my poetry, in succession to the two-volume New York edition which has recently gone out of print, to make some modifications of contents. Apart from single short poems included and excluded for various reasons, I have omitted the poetical Indian drama, "The King's Wife," which was included in *A Bardic Pilgrimage*, not from necessity of space, but because it will find its appropriate place, as a drama that has been performed in a number of Indian languages, in a collection of my plays that will follow this volume.

I retain in this collection, however, the short verse-play "The Sleep of the King," because, though it was the first item of the first organized indigenous company of the Irish dramatic revival (1902), its true spiritual location is that given it in this volume in the middle of a trilogy of poems expressing, in terms of Irish legend, my vision of the emergence of the Soul of the Universe, in "The Going Forth of Dana"; the call of the spiritual life to the Soul in incarnation, in "The Sleep of the King"; and the culmination of the Soul's experience in the union of its outer and inner aspects, in "The Marriage of Lir and Niav." When there came my way some time later a new translation from the Irish of the story of the descent of Etain, the Celtic Psyche, from the inmost world of the spirit, through the midway realm of the Gods, to the outer world of Eire, and her recall to her true spiritual state, I could not resist the temptation to another imaginative pilgrimage around the inevitable cycle of life, particularly as the story, being psychological rather than cosmic, took me nearer to the intimacies of the individual human spirit in its

fall and rise from allegiance to allegiance; nearer also, to the exquisite constants of nature in which my own spirit found entrance to a life of beautiful love and of an ever-increasing love of the beautiful. I am therefore specially happy to be able to restore "Etain the Beloved" to its full length, instead of the shortened version of *A Wandering Harp*, and thus to repair an artistic injury to my retelling of the old Bardic tale that was inflicted not by my desire but by spatial necessity.

To the contents of the two semi-collections I have added those of a small subsequent book, *The Oracle*, and a few recent poems. To these the matters touched on in the prefaces quoted above equally apply. In the realm of poetry, as I know it, continental and national boundary-stones, which indicate the rich and delectable variety of nature and humanity, do not go deep enough to break the unity of life, or high enough to obscure its inspiration and illumination.

J. H. C.

Frontispiece from a photograph by Rawal, Ahmedabad.

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TO
MARGARET E. COUSINS

“ THE VOICE OF ONE ”

I

I am the voice of one who cries:
Lo! I have lived my little day ;
Have looked within a woman's eyes,
And seen them covered up with clay.

And I have laughed as well as wept;
Have found my foes, and made my friends.
Through mighty issues I have slept—
And waked to unmomentous ends:

Have companied with hope and fear;
Have followed Love's mysterious star,
And dreamed it infinitely near—
Yet found it infinitely far.

And I have seen my fairy gold
Turn all to dull misshapen lead;
And hungry I have been, and cold,
And wished me harboured with the dead.

And sometimes I have longed to free
My soul from all that stains and mars,
To taste the quiet in the sea,
The peace that lodges with the stars.

II

I am the voice of one who cries:
Lo! I have stood beside the deep;
And I have watched the twilight skies
Grow grey with mystery and sleep,

While soft clouds held the last of light,
And furrowed all the sunset way
Where bent the silver scythe of night
To reap the aftermath of day.

And I have heard strange voices speak
In words half uttered, half withdrawn,
While far away a mountain peak
Put on the vestments of the dawn;

And o'er the adoring world there hung
Great silence as the Lord passed by,
And Day his golden censer swung
Across the altar of the sky.

III

I am the voice of one who cries:
Lo! here I cannot stop or stay.
I am not good, I am not wise,
I only follow far away;

. And, seeing not, I yearn for sight
To read the heart of praise or blame,
To catch the beam within the light,
And feel the fire behind the flame;

Or, rapt from all the tyrant hours
That write their names in tears and blood,
I long to pluck immortal flowers,
And bathe me in a cool clear flood;

And know that thing for which I seek
With frustrate fingers blind and dead;
And turn Truth's never-ceasing wheel,
And from its distaff spin my thread.

And so with ever-watching eyes
I live my life from day to day.
I am the voice of one who cries,
And crying wander on my way.

ADRIFT IN MOONLIGHT

Our oars point skyward left and right,
And on the soft, slow stream,
Amid the balmy hush of night,
Across the moon's broad beam,
We slip from shine to shine through shade
By old aspiring poplars made.

To such an hour as this belongs
A sense—not joy, not woe;
A hum of half-remembered songs
And laughter long ago;
A sadness caught from other years,
Too vague for words, too sweet for tears.

And mingled by the gentle wind
With sounds we once have known,
We hear strange music, half-divined,
From spirit bugles blown,
And feel the wafture of the wings
Of mystic, unbegotten things.

In such an hour as this the soul
Shakes free from sense that cloys,
And sights afar her starry goal,
And thrills to nobler joys
Than those vouchsafed when lithesome limbs
Danced to impassioned Paphian hymns.

We break and drop the chains of Earth,
And feel at home in Heaven,
And with the sense of royal birth
A mighty wish is given
To snap the sunset's brazen bars,
And snatch the secret from the stars.

From such rare hours—as brief as few—
Our dearest hope is this:
To win an ampler voice and view,
To draw a deeper bliss,
And hear reverberate through our dreams
The thunder of immortal themes.

BEHIND THE PLOUGH

Black wings and white in the hollow
Follow the track of the team,
While the sun from the noon declining
Is shining on toil-damp brows.
Birds of the mountain and sea-birds
Circle and swoop and scream,
Searching for spoils of the furrow
Where slowly the ploughman ploughs.

Make me room, O birds! I am sweeping
From the boughs of sleeping afar.
I have winged through the mists of the ages
Where sages drone and drowse.
I follow the feet of the Horses
That drag the Morning-star,
To search in the spoils of the furrow
Where God the Ploughman ploughs.

SCRABO ROCK

The rugged rock against the sky
Heaves high a tower-topped crest,
Whence widens out beneath the eye
The realms of east and west.
Here lies a land but seldom sung;
This crudely noble crown,
And that white sea that moves among
The fertile fields of Down.

Unsung—and wherefore, lovely land?
Hast thou not ample store
For song, from yonder ocean strand
To Strangford's shining shore?
Hast thou not throbbed to foamy flanks,
And sound of Saxon steel;
To crash of Cromwell's battling ranks,
And clansmen of O'Neill?

And yet, not all thy songful crown
Is strife of right with wrong.
Here limpid lark-streams trickle down
A hundred peaks of song;
There, silent sheep and lambkins lie,
A white, uncertain thing,
Like lingering snow that fain would spy
The secret of the spring.

The roaming robber-breezes catch
And hither upward float
A lusty lilt and vagrant snatch
From some far rustic throat;
And blusters by with strident shout
From scenes of revelry
That libertine of flower and sprout,
The bacchanalian bee.

Dear land of love and happy lot
Of merry maids and swains;
Worthy the martial muse of Scott
And Virgil's pastoral strains!
Loved land! this tongue thy song would share;
This votive soul is thine.
Thy lips are loud with praise and prayer.
Pray God they kindle mine.

INSPIRATION AND EXPRESSION

I heard a wonderful thing
When I drank of the Spirit's Wine;
And what I heard I sing:
But only the song is mine:

Only the struggle of speech,
Like a whirl of leaves in a blast

Or a fringe of shells on a beach
That tells of a wave that has passed.

From a rapture a moment shared
I fall on a broken wing:
But what I have heard—I have heard;
And the least is the song I sing.

SONG AND SINGERS

I am a reed in a wind,
That bends in a low lagoon;
But the wind that at morn my head inclined
May roar on the hills at noon;
May bear the passionate wingers
That carry their songs to the sun.
Many the songs and the singers,
But song at its heart is one.

MOULTED FEATHERS

Along the line on the yellow sand where the
tide to its highest rose,
A long white line of moulted feathers of vanished
sea-birds is shed.
Strangely it shakes the heart with the touch of
a life beyond ours that comes and goes;

Fullness—and ebb into distance; flight—and
its wing defeated and shed!

And perhaps on the mystic verge of desire,
where immortal and mortal meet;
Where the Land of the Ever Young is frayed
and strewn by the urge of our human tide,
Some godlike one will smile and sigh at these
moulted feathers of song at his feet,—
And I shall be satisfied!

LOVE'S ADVENT

I cannot set a finger on the place
Or time or circumstance, and surely say
'Twas thus and then across the gathering grey
Of my lone life shot the first golden trace
Of love for thee. I see within thy face
Something that has been with me all the way,
Affinity and reflex night and day;
And lo! my heart feels, knows, and loves apace.

How, why? I cannot tell. I only know
One wide, white love has cancelled all the sum
Of all life's lesser loves. I can but speak
As might the watcher on some northern peak
Long night-bound, who eastward beholds a glow,
And cries: "The day, the glad great day has come!"

LOVE'S APPEAL

Oh! let me love thee, if but one brief hour.
Oh! let me take unchidden from thy lips
The fruit of knowledge which, to him who sips,
Brings joy unreckoned in the angels' dower.
Oh! fill one spacious moment with the power
Of pure, unmeasured love, though stinging whips
Of fire next moment into black eclipse
Drive me from thy pure Eden's passionless bower.

Then thou mayst set an angel at the gate
Of thine inviolate heart with burning blade
Flashing. I shall not flinch. I shall have known
Earth's sweetest guerdon. I shall stand elate
On life's pale summit, strong and undismayed,
Immutably, immortally alone.

TO EIRE

To thee, beloved! of old there came
The sailors of a thousand ships,
Who learned to love thy hidden name,
And love the music on thy lips.

And some, who thought to build thy pyre,
And on its ruin rear a throne,
Have loved to sit around thy fire
And count thy saddest songs their own.

And sons of thine, who broke love's bands
To seek a fabled, far-off shore,
Grope through the world with aching hands,
And hunger for thee evermore.

For, though thy sorrows may not cease,
Though, blessing, thou art still unblest,
Thou hast for men a gift of peace,
O daughter of divine unrest!

IRELAND IN AUTUMN

Something of autumn splendour round thee lies.
Yet think it not the prelude of thy death;
For there is that within thy heart which saith
The prophet-word that blossoms in thine eyes:—
“ Heed not the seasonal portent of the skies,
Nor count the clouds more than a passing breath
Sun-drawn from half a world that offereth
Its votive incense to the year that flies.”

That Hand which bevels down the shortening day
Is one with that which quickens leaf and wing;
So, promise of resurgence in decay
Thou hast, and, in thine autumn, germs of spring
To vindicate these lips that lately said:
They dreamed a lie who deemed thee wholly dead.

THE AWAKENING

In this exalted hour, between the light
Of sinking moon and rising morn, mine ear
Gathers, from quivering leaf and river clear,
Sounds deepened by the touch of passing night;
While on a leafy platform, shut from sight,
But to the soul, by hearing, doubly near,
A bird, heart-throbbing with the opening year,
Outsoars in song his wing's extremest flight.

New day, new birth, new hope, new power,
 have given
Wings to the soul to soar and leave behind
Life's inessentials. What majestic sky
Is this, where, unamazed, from some old heaven
I hear the harp of Angus¹ on the wind,
And feel Cuchullin's² arm go battling by?

GOD'S LURE

God willed of old to lift thine ancient Name,
That thou, through suffering made most wise, most
 pure,
Shouldst bear before all men the Soul's white lure,
And lead them through the purifying flame.

¹ *Angus, the Irish God of Love.*

² *Cuchullin, the Irish "saviour," of joint celestial and terrestrial ancestry.*

But, lest thine eager feet should foil the aim
Of Time's slow builders, building strong and sure,
He mingled with thy fire, that shall endure,
Somewhat of earth—for shackle, not for shame.

Thou art not wholly earth, nor all divine;
And though rude hands of sons undutiful
Build in the clay and soil thy royal dress,
Mother of mighty dreams! let joy be thine:
Thou still hast beauty for the beautiful,
And proud, glad lovers for thy loveliness.

THE TWELVE BENS¹

With gorgeous pageantry of light and cloud
The mighty Bens this morn above me rose,
Clothing their agony of ancient throes
In awful majesty, aloof and proud;
Like elder Gods to whom all wisdom bowed;
Who, passed through sweetening flame and
 cleansing snows,
Now fill the thrones of infinite repose,
To utmost calm and contemplation vowed.

O solemn power of Beauty that is born
Of vast calamity and hoary time!
Spirit whose smile transfigures ruining fate!

¹ Connemara.

Be hers whose eyes are weary for the morn;
Be mine, to fill her ear with hope's glad chime:
"Peace! my beloved: a little longer wait."

ON SLIEVE CULLEN¹

The dusk fell grey on Cullen
When we climbed, my love and I.
Like a dream the dim world faded,
And the lonely stars drew nigh.
Oh! our thoughts were full of labour,
Weary limbs and shattered spears,
While the face of Ireland darkened
As it darkened through the years,
Through the broken, bleeding years.

The night lay deep on Cullen
When we slept, my love and I,
On the fragrant whispering heather,
With our faces to the sky.
Oh! our dreams were full of longing,
Full of ancient woes and tears,
While the heart of Ireland slumbered
As it slumbered through the years,
Through the slow and heavy years.

¹ Slieve Cullen is now known as the Sugarloaf Mountain, County Wicklow.

. The dawn broke sweet on Cullen
When we woke, my love and I,
And the mists like marching heroes
Swiftly, silently went by.
Oh! we sent three shouts to heaven,
And we snapped the chain of fears,
For the soul of Ireland rises
To possess the coming years,
Rises, triumphs through the years!

1908.

A DEDICATION

To my wife

I said: "Since golden dust of garnered sheaves
Dulls in each crevice of the threshing-floor,
And swift sweet wings that seek a sunnier shore
Have left a troubling silence beneath our eaves;
I will arise, though Earth in autumn grieves,
And bring with pipes and dancing to her door
Harvest of dreams from fields of ancient lore."
Alas! I bring these few poor fallen leaves.

Yet of my leaves I twine for your loved brows
This chaplet: yours, not mine; for you have trod
My being's bounds; yours is the hand that ploughs
And sows, and draws new life from the dead sod;
And you have moved among my silent boughs
And stirred them with a wind that comes from God.

THE GOING FORTH OF DANA.

Wrapped in His robes of everlasting light
Whose shadow is the splendour of high noon,
The Nameless One, out of a lonely dream
Of suns and stars that pulsed along the veins
Of uncreated night, awoke and said:
One for the seed, but for the sowing, twain:
And Dagda stood with Dana by His side.

Then spake the Nameless One: *Behold! I am;*
But Thou shalt be. Eternal spring is nigh;
And who would hold it needs must sow and sow
Unceasingly. So Dagda and Dana passed
Forth from the Presence, He to find the seed,
And she to scatter; one, yet ever twain.
And, as They passed, the eternal Silence moved,
Trembled, and flowed into a mighty Word
Wherein all expectation gathered up
A rumour as of spring, and sundering earth,
And opening things, and under moist young leaves
Thin pipings, and a going to and fro
Of tender shades.

Across ethereal fields
Dana moved slowly, scattering the seed
That fell and flamed in gold of heavy corn,
Nor paused till over the fields a Shadow passed,
As might some strange new thought across a face

Wrapped in a waking dream;—and by Her side
One stood and said: *Thy hand doth heavy grow,*
Thine eyes wax weary of the flaming gold
That burns along Thy fields unquenchably,
And burns into Thy heart. Rest Thee a while.
From whence Thou comest I too came, and fain
Would sow Thy seed for Thee. But Dana said:
I sow and sow that spring may ihus endure;
For if I pause, the harvest will be here,
And million-mouthed will cry within my heart
For toiling hands and heavy-beaded brows
And bending backs and hot and aching feet,
And all the world that now is folded up
Within me. Therefore do I sow and sow.

Then He who moved beside Her spake again:
Since rest may not be Thine, my feet shall tread
From furrow unto furrow with Thine own,
And handful for Thy handful scatter far,
If so Thou willest it. He stretched His hand
As though He tenderly would touch Her arm
That wave-like rose and fell, white as the moon
Glimmering between the boughs of some deep wood
When odorous winds breathe morning, and the firs
Obeisant bend and rise, and fill the eye
With silver glories broken by eclipse.
Then She, within Whose bosom sorrow and joy,
All wisdom and all folly, peace and strife,
Mingled, and set within Her steadfast eyes

The passion of divine dispassion, turned,
And tenderly unto His tenderness
Inclined Her head. He from Her basket scooped
A handful of the seed that, more and more
Broad-scattered, grew no less, and over the fields
Flung it afar,—and, when it fell, laughed loud,
And vanished.

Straightway sprang to fullest bloom
Innumerable flowers. About Her feet
Violet and pansy trembled with delight
At such great life. Across the farther fields
The hyacinth trailed like a faint blue mist;
While, at the foot of heavy-fronded ferns,
The cowslip's little rocket skyward shot
And earthward fell in throbbing yellow stars;
And through the marigold's low-smouldering fire
The crimson tulip flickered like a flame.
Then, as a babe uplifts ecstatic hands
And downward draws a face that smiling bends
Above its own, and takes a proffered kiss,
So the fair flowers the fairer Dana drew
And drank Her rapturous kisses as She knelt
And buried Her immortal face for joy
Among their young sweet splendours.

Suddenly,
As if a Voice had leaped from highest Heaven
To deepest Hell, and on the nether floor

Rebounded Heavenwards, smitten sore and scarred,
And scattered in a myriad babbling tongues,
Though none had spoken, Dana raised Her head,
Her fingers lingering in the lovely flowers;
And through a sudden guilt that rioted
Along Her veins and burned upon Her cheeks,
Saw Dagda standing where, a moment past,
One else had stood. A trouble in Her face
Troubled His heart; yet motionless He stood,
Nor spake a word, but over ripened fields
Cast His all-seeing and all-knowing eyes,
And mused in silence till the silence broke
Wave-like in one loud Word in Dana's heart,
And, million-mouthed, cried out for toiling hands
And aching feet and heavy-beaded brows,
For spring had passed, and harvest was at hand.

Then Dagda stooped, and touched Her bended head,
And said: *The Day is passing into days,*
And all that Is, to all that is to be,
For spring has passed, and harvest is at hand,
And who shall gather but the scatterer?
Then all Her soul went out in one great sigh
As earthward Dana sank, and left Her face
Pale with majestic sorrow unexpressed,
And eloquent of the multitudinous world
Of unbegotten things that in Her heart
Clamoured to be.

Prostrate among the flowers .

Wherein all beauty bloomed, and all delight
Danced to the reed of newly wakened winds,
She quenched Her burning eyes, and round their stems
Bent like a scythe Her arm, whereon Her head
Rested, but found no rest, for rest was done,
And in Her ears a Voice far inward called:
One for the seed, and for the sowing twain;
But for the ripening, three; for reaping, seven;
And seven times seven for the garnering.

Then Dana wept. But Dagda, bending low,
Smoothed the wet locks that clung about Her face,
And voiced the thoughts that stumbled round Her brain
Like burdened horses: *Whoso scattereth*
Must reap; and reaping calls for many hands
To cut, to bind, and on the threshing-floor
Beat out the grain, and garner. Therefore Thou
Within Whose breast all sorrow, all delight,
All weakness and all strength commingle, Thou
Who from unutterable Light cam'st forth
With me co-equal, co-eternal, Thou
Shalt break Thy virgin cincture, and shalt give
Seven sons to reap Thy harvest; Thou shalt tread
The weary wheel that spins the whirling worlds
Till Thine almighty sons shall come again
With shoutings when, across the farthest fields,
The latest wain brings home its glittering load

Of sheaves that quicken for a spring to be.
He paused; and Dana, smiling through Her tears,
Raised to His proffered hand Her own, and rose,
And stood erect, and said: *The way is long,*
And I must go alone: yet not alone,
For that which moves within me to its birth
Is Thou. He kissed Her forehead.

In the east

A crimson glory flashed along the fields,
And from its heart a burning spear out-leaped
And struck Her brow with palpitating fire,
So that Her eyes, smitten with sudden Light,
Moved darkly to and fro, and, seeing nought
Save darkness, turned unto the fire again,
And gazed until the fire itself grew dark,
And in its heart, mirrored in blackest night,
She saw the smoke of battles yet to be,
And heard harsh voices crying after peace:
Whereunto Dana, stretching yearning hands,
Moved as a sleeper passing from a sleep.

At length, foot-weary, Dana sought the shade
Of whispering trees, beside a cataract
Whose flashing waters, gathered by the sun
And cloud-borne to a sheer white summit, fell
And foamed among tall ferns, and laughing leaped
From rock to rock, and whirled at Dana's feet

In glistening garrulous eddies: thence they flowed
Among the mellow glooms of budding oaks,
And slipped into the silence of a lake
On whose drowsed bosom dreaming lilies lay
Pure as the cool white blossom of the dawn.
Upon a bank broidered with moss and thyme,
Dewy at noon, but softened by the sun
To odorous warmth, She sat. Above Her head
A hazel rustled, shattering heavy sheaths
From which ripe fruit fell flashing in the pool
Beneath Her, as She laved Her burning feet
And rested.

But across Her rest there came
A murmur of Seven Names as yet unnamed;
And with the wind that bore it came the scent
And sound of seething billows of bursting corn,
But never voice of reaper. Dana rose
Saying: *The way is long, and I alone
Must tread it and the wheel that spins the worlds.*
But, ere She went Her way, thirsting She bent
And from the glittering circles of the pool
Lifted unto Her lips a cooling draught
That spun within Her pearly hollowed hand.
Through Her white fingers fell a sparkling shower
That broke in plumy sprays, and caught the light
In seven little rainbows which Her eyes
Wove into one.

She drank the draught, and turned
And crossed the deepening gloom of leafing oaks,
And touched the margin of the silent lake
Where in the reeds a heron silver-white
Waited and watched with sidelong searching eye
The pebbly shallows. On the grassy marge
Dana moved mournfully, nor raised Her head
Till in the reeds a shudder of silver broke
In one soft wave that laughed across Her path,
Tinkling in tiny tumults about Her feet,
And sighing passed away. Then Dana looked
And marked where, high upon a rocky ridge,
The heron stood, jet-black against the moon
That, vapour-veiled and blanching like a bride
Within whose heart a terrible delight
Woos and repels, rose rounding to the full,
And with it a chill mist. Then Dana turned
For comfort to the west. Upon the hills
A passionate glory like a lover lay,
Stretching wild arms that burned along the sky,
And, closing round Her, clasped Her in a thrill
Of flaming ecstasy, so that Her feet,
Weary no more, but swift with all desire,
Flew like a glimmer of light along the grass,
And vanished in the flame upon the hills.

Note : "The Going Forth of Dana" follows Irish mythological precedents, but has no original, save in the illuminated imagination from which the Irish myths also came. Dagda and Dana are the primal Father and Mother of the Universe.

THE SLEEP OF THE KING .

CONN, *High King of Ireland, A.D. 125.*

CONNLA, *his son.*

FAIRY PRINCESS.

CORAN, *a druid.*

FAIRY CHORUS.

SCENE, *a forest glade with a moss-covered bank in the background.*

Enter CONN, *crowned, with Connla, facing the sunset.* CONN *leans heavily with his hand on Connla's shoulder.*

CONNLA, *speaking as they advance,*

Now to the mighty pillars of the day

Night puts a mightier shoulder. In the west
Smoulder the shattered glories, piled on high
As though a king were passing to his urn.

CONN, *as to himself, with solemn import, pausing,*
“ As though a king were passing to his urn.”

CONNLA. My father, thou art sad.

Note : “ *The Sleep of the King* ” is founded on the Irish legend of “ Connla of the Golden Hair.” It was the first play performed by The Irish National Theatre Society, Dublin, October 1902; Conn, Frank Fay; Connla, P. J. Kelly; Fairy Princess, Mary Walker, Coran, Dudley Digges.

CONN.. Nay, nay, not sad.

The quiet of the woods is on my heart,
The silence that is in the end of days.

CONNLA. But wherefore didst thou pause?

CONN. I know not wherefore.

It may be I am tired and yearn for sleep;
For I have come long leagues, and in my hair
The roadway dust is matted with the mists
Of leafy valleys. (*Approaching the bank.*) Let
us rest awhile.

(*Seated.*) Coran the druid chants beyond the
woods,

And binds the sacred oak upon his brow.
The watchers pass along from tent to tent,
And all is well.

CONNLA. For well thy potent arm
Swayed the broad-sword till it outlived its use.
Now Eire's fields from springtime unto harvest
Thrill with the joy of sowing and of reaping.
Her happy homes from harvest-time till spring
Are merry with the murmur of the quern.
In peace her children come, her old men go;
And all the year is girt about with song,
And thou art in the song, my king, my father.

He seats himself on the ground at CONN's knee.

CONN. Sometimes my heart grows weary of my
name,

And weary of the sound of harp and song,

And hungers for great peace. (*He takes off his crown and sets it on the bank beside him.*)

CONNLA.

And here is peace,

And here we rest, as willing captives, bound
In the sweet thraldom of the regnant night.

(*He chants.*) Rest, rest,

Sigh and jest,
Wise and foolish, gay and grave.
Down, down,
Sword and crown.
Sleep is master of King and slave.

They have both drifted into sleep.

A WOMAN'S VOICE, *chanting in the distance.*

Night with ruddy lip
Sips the dregs of day;
Swooning o'er the world in sleep
Deep as the sleep of a child.

CONN (*stirring sleepily*). Coran the druid chants.

CONNLA (*half awake*). His voice is weak
And far away.

CONN. The woods drink up its depth:
What reaches us is but the flying spray.

They drift into sleep again.

VOICE (*nearer*). Now beneath the quicken
Thicken sombre shades.
In the glades the fairies dance
Underneath white stars that glance

Over wood and wild
Sleeping like a child.

The FAIRY PRINCESS has entered and observed the sleepers. As she approaches and scrutinizes them there is heard a

FAIRY CHORUS. The sun dropped down the sky,
and fell

Into a golden crucible,
From which uprolled
Clouds flushed with fire, that curved and curled,
And we shook them, and flooded half the world
With gold. (*They laugh.*)

FAIRY PRINCESS *takes the crown and puts it on CONNLA's head. She puts a spell on CONN's brow.*

FAIRY CHORUS. We are the dusky sunset brood,
Pursuing the daylight yet ever pursued;
And with laugh and shout
From caverns of cloud we roystering came,
And the last of the lingering sunset flame
Blew out. (*They laugh loudly, and enter as the FAIRY PRINCESS beckons them.*)

PRINCESS. Here a king lies, overthrown
By a foe he has not known;
One who never crossed his sight,
Yet who slays him night by night.
Dance, ye fairies, dance, and sing—
Sleep is conqueror of the king.

CHORUS, *circling the sleepers, boisterously.*

Dance, dance, dance and sing—

Sleep is conqueror of the king.

CONNLA *stirs as if waking.*

PRINCESS, *waving the fairies away,*

Ah! he awakes. The sweet and princely face
Lights like a morn of spring beneath a cloud
Of glowing gold. Away, ye twilight ones,
Shake now the Branch of Night, and let its bells
Tremble with music, till the souls of men
Bloom upward through the soil of sleep, and
flower

And fructify in gardens no man tills.

CONNLA (*awake, to himself*). A sound of ripples
round a slanted prow

Came through my slumber. Do I sleep or wake?

PRINCESS. The king doth sleep, and I have crowned
thee king.

CONNLA (*rising*). Thou—Who art thou?

PRINCESS. I have not any name,
For I have many: one is in my heart,
And whosoever finds that name finds all.

CONNLA. But what art thou, whence comest, whither
goest?

PRINCESS. I am the lonely one amid the throng.

I am the royal beggar at the door
Of hushed and listening hearts. Among the dew
At dawn I wander, and at eve I breathe

On upturned faces round the fires of men.
I have a throne among the ageless stars,
And with the waving grass and fluttering moth,
And with the infant smile on ageing lips,
And with the immortal dreams of mortal hearts.

CONNLA. Fame hath indeed been envious of thy fame,

Or like a poet stricken dumb in song
With rapture of his theme. At fair or feast
No song of thee has passed across the harps,—
Though thou art not unworthy of the praise
Of king or bard, thou beauteous nameless one!

PRINCESS. Men praise not me on strings that break
and fall.

Men praise me not in words that thrill and pass.
No song of me is carved on withering staves.
My praise is in the hush between their songs,
And in the silence of the leaning spear
In battle-pauses rumorous of peace,
O Connla of the flowing golden hair!

CONNLA. Thou namest me, and yet I know not thee.
But—stay! (*with growing rapture*) I think that
face has touched my dreams
With silver light, and drawn my being's tide,
And beckoned me by old and foot-worn ways
Through vales and over mountains to a shore
Where crawled a bearded wave by crumbling
caves;

And beckoned me across a tranquil sea .
Into the golden glories of a dawn
Beyond the tides of death and birth and sleep.—
But wherefore hast thou wakened me from sleep?

PRINCESS. Because thou art the best beloved of men.

CONNLA. I am indeed in honour of the king,
And blessed with noble friendship; but for me
No princess sighs at mention of my name,
Or pensively out-stares the morning star.

PRINCESS. Yet thou art not unloving.

CONNLA. Nay, for me
There breathes a rapture in the silent hour
When, in the primrose twilight, flower and tree
Exhale great life, unbosoming to love
Their perfumed secrets; when on Usna's hill
The serried forests raise their mighty spears,
A shadowy army wounding the wan sky
With prayer, while from their hearts the ring-
dove's coo
Comes iterant of love, and calls me forth
To find my love.

PRINCESS. Now has thy love found thee.

CONNLA. O voice that I have heard among the
stars!

O eyes that looked from old mysterious caves!
O arms that I have felt about the world!
Now do I hear thee, see thee, now possess
Exultant as high noon!

PRINCESS (*restraining his approach*). Not yet, not yet:
I am not won by words.

CONNLA. Then say what deed
Shall win thee. Speak, and ere another dusk
A thousand and a thousand I shall slay!
He draws his sword.

PRINCESS. Nay, not in crimson sod or flaming pyre
Do I rejoice. The scent of wayside flowers,
The chirp of little birds within the nest,
The murmured words that quiet aching hearts,
Are more to me than horn or battle-call.
My king shall mount no perilous throne. My
throne
Shall bear no power-proud king. Put by the
sword.

I am not won by deeds.

CONNLA (*sheathing his sword*). Oh! tell me then
How I may win thee?

PRINCESS. Follow where I go.

CONNLA. Whither, oh, whither, and how long the
way?

PRINCESS. A little past the beating of the heart,
A little past the finger-tip of faith,
It may be in the murmuring homes of men;
It may be in the solitude of hills;
It may be by the rock and querulous wave
That thou shalt find me, know me, and possess.
Come— follow. See! the king wakes!

She moves away beckoning. CONN sighs and stirs. CONNLA makes to go but is held back. He puts his hand to his head in perplexity, and feeling the crown, sets it where it was at first.

PRINCESS (*commanding*). Connla! (*He turns towards her.*)

PRINCESS (*entreating*). Come!
He approaches her with outstretched arms. She disappears.

CONN (*awake*). Connla, my son, where art thou?

CONNLA (*stopping*). I am here.

CONN. Thou art a voice that comes from anywhere
Across a moonlit lake. Thou standest far.

Come near. I am beset by troublous dreams
And have sore need of comfort.

CONNLA. Nay, dream on,
Lest thou shouldst wake to troubles never
dreamed.

CONN. What troubles? Am not I the hundred-
fighter,

High King of Ireland? I have strength to break
The iron stroke of war; and now, when peace
Lays a white hand upon the brow of Eire,
What need have I for fear, save in my
dreams?

Why dost thou stand afar? Why dost thou gaze
Like watchers by the sea?

CONNLA. Oh! very far

I have to go, and needs must look before.

CONN. And whither dost thou go?

CONNLA. I know not whither?

CONN. But wherefore dost thou go?

CONNLA. I know not wherefore,

But that she called: "Connla, come, follow me."

CONN (*half rising*). And who is she?

CONNLA. She has not any name,

For she has many. One is in her heart,

And whosoever finds that name finds all.

CONN (*rising, alarmed*). Now have I need for fear.

Coran ! Coran!

Come hither, druid. Connla, my son, my son!

Surely thou wilt not go and leave me lonely?

CORAN enters on one side, and the PRINCESS, unobserved, on the other.

CONNLA. She is the lonely one amid the throng.

She called, and I must go.

CONN. Speak! speak! Coran,

Or I am beggared of all hope and love.

Send forth thy spell and break the spell that
binds

And draws my son away.

CORAN raises his hands above his head and endeavours to invoke power, but in vain.

PRINCESS, unseen by them, cancels Coran's efforts with a raised finger.

CONN. Speak! speak! Coran.
CORAN (*dropping his hands*). A greater spell than
mine has broken mine,
And I am emptied of all power.

CONN. Oh, then,

Since nought avails, and thou, my son, must go,
I shall obey a call I have not heard,
And go with thee.

CORAN. Stay! stay! O King of Eire!
The son deserts the father; but shalt thou,
The royal father of thy people, go
And leave them fatherless?

CONN (*lifting his crown*). My land, my people,
I cannot leave, though I am childless left.

CORAN. O Connla! son of Conn, the Hundred-Fighter,

Be mindful of the knees that thou hast climbed—

CONN. Which but for age would bend before thee
now

Beseeching thee to leave me not, but stay.

CONNLA. She is the royal beggar at the door
Of hushed and listening hearts.

Around the board—

CONN (*offering the crown*). Where thou shalt sit as king.

CONNLA. Her throne shall bear no power-proud king. Her king

Shall mount no perilous throne amid decay.

Her throne is with all changeless changing things,
And with the everlasting stars.

A distant chant is heard as at first. CONNLA
listens in rapture.

CONN.

Coran,

Whence comes that sound?

CORAN. The harpers tune their harps
To sing thy praise. The men of wisdom wait
To be made wise by little words of thine.

CONN (*to Coran, resigning himself to his crown*). Come.

CONN goes away leaning on Coran's shoulder.

PRINCESS (*close to Connla*). Come.

CONNLA goes away after the Princess.

Distant harps are heard mingled with the Fairy Chorus.

The music slowly dies away.

Darkness falls.

THE MARRIAGE OF LIR AND NIAV

Lir, son of Dana, Lord of the seven seas
That washed the seven islands of the world,
The chief called Eire, in the royal place
Sat in deep silence. Round his throne there stood
Seven lords vicegerent of the seven isles,
Who spake the will of Lir because their own
Had shaped them to such semblance to the king
That, but for age, none knew them each from each.
So stood they, ranked in years, as though at noon
Of some great day the shadow of the king
Had clothed itself in time, and waxed in years,
The while the king passed on from age to age
Unageing. At the silence of the king
They marvelled much, but spake not: rather, spake
In one swift glance, distilled from all their years,
A meaning not in speech. For well they knew
What mighty winds were folded in the calm
Of Lir's great brow, and how within his heart
The wave but drew a momentary breath
Before it swept the borders of the seas,
And leaped upon the shore of some far isle,
And, swift returning, bore upon its crest
The white plume of allegiance to the king.
For thus they too had come, and one by one
Laid down their lordship at the feet of Lir,
And passed again each to his own fair isle,

And ruled it for the king, and dwelt in peace.
Year after year they came to tell the tale
Of harvest upon harvest, marsh and moor
Broken and tamed and harnessed to the will
Of happy peoples. But with each new tale
That bent with age from semblance to the old,
The pleasure of the king grew thin, and broke
As breaks a garment worn beyond its time.

Then rose the king and said: "So yet again
The year brings round the unwearying tale of peace
Whereof I weary, and your happiness
Makes misery in me. O ye faithful ones!
So well ye serve that well is turned to ill,
And I am burdened with the weight of nothing.
What profits me this affluence? What avails
This peace that slumbers on its rusted harp
For lack of song? What joy is in the chant
Of what is done save when it nerves the arm
Of those who do? for doing is all in all.
Hence! hence! Fling out the oars! Spread wide the
sails!
The noise of billows buffeting dipping prows
Sings in my ears and cries 'The sea! the sea!
The strong salt breeze that crisps upon the lips
And turns the blood to rivers of fresh mead!
How blows the wind?" "From eastward," answered
one;

And through a window opening on the east . . .
A strong salt breeze blew round the hall and shook
The torch-flames till the shadow of the king
Broke into shadows dancing with delight,
Although the king stood still, erect and rapt
In some bright dream that shone upon his face
And lit the red-gold tresses of his hair
With the soft glow of morning. “From the west”
Another said who marked the upper clouds,
And knew the wind would blow this way and that
And neither long, so that the leaping waves,
Whipped back upon themselves, would rear their
heads,
And snap white teeth, and shake their smoky manes,
And vex the rowers with their restlessness,
And set them snarling. “Better it were, O king!”
Thus said a third, “to wait a settled wind,
And take the stride of long unanimous waves
With strong slow swing of sure and steady oars,
And ropes that thrill like harp-strings newly strung,
And full stiff sails.” So spake three other lords
Likewise. And he who was the last to bend
Before the power of Lir, and rose in strength
To rule his island, Eire, for the king,
Spake thus: “And better were it that the king,
Who is of kings most kingly, and of men
Most manly and comely, should seek out a bride
Among the isles that own his happy sway.

So might the love that binds them each to each
Find voice to speak the love they bear the king,
And thus be bound in love that is not bound,
Seeing it is a gift themselves have given."

Then answered Lir as though from out a dream:
"The wind is from the east and from the west,
And whence upon the morrow who shall tell,
Or whither, or what fair enchanted isle
Lies at the place where all the winds are furled
And harboured? Yet, what matter? To your own
Return you now; for it were well to keep
The law that binds till you have learned the law
That breaks and scatters." Then they, pondering,
passed

Each to his isle, and ruled it for the king,
And kept the law.

But when their ships had rowed
Into the night like windward faring gulls
That beat the air with slow and heavy wing
Across the billows, Lir, within his booth,
Put off his crown, and cast his robe aside,
And stole, a shadow, to a shadowy place
Where slumbrous waves moved shoreward in the
dark,
And fell, and sighed, and sighing fell asleep,
Because the winds had warred themselves to peace.
There slept the king, and dreamed of one who bent

And touched his brow with lips of silvery fire,
And spake his name as though it were her own,
Or one that she had given him in a dream
Some otherwhere and he had quite forgot.
Suddenly Lir awoke as one who feels
A presence by his side; and through his mind
There passed the words: " Better it were the king
Should seek a bride among the happy isles
That own his sway." He rose and slowly paced
Along the margin of the moving sea
That in the dark had slumbered to the full,
And musing spake: " Twere better that the king
Should brideless live, and fill a brideless urn,
Than wed the weakness that his power has broken,
Or set a flaming envy on his throne
To burn it from the world. And yet perhaps
The day has come to establish it in strength
Beyond the shocks of time and circumstance."
But as he spake, across his word of power
A gentle tremor thrilled, as when at eve
Along the roar of plunging battle-prows
A lonely plover mews to find his mate.
For in Lir's heart the word of his last lord
Had roused the memory of a tender dream
So vague, so far beyond the misty verge
Of time and sense, that to his ear it came
Like the sweet echo of a chant of love
Heard once, before the gates of birth had closed

Upon the music that has built the worlds.
Thus musing, Lir passed onward. At his feet
The serpent-wave, white hooded, coiled and turned,
And, jutting silvery fangs, hissed to its home
Among sonorous eddies in a cove
Where dimly in the gathering dawn a boat
Strained at its ropes and groaned for liberty.
Hither, still musing, came the king, and paused
And said : "Thou too art weary of the peace
Of harbour. Thou art hungry for the sea,
And seas beyond the sea." Smiling he marked
How, wave by wave, the boat drew near the shore,
Then swung upon the billows' backward roll
Until upon a star-white curling crest
It shivered at the shock of straining cords,
And bowed, and sobbed itself again to shore.
Eight times the king had watched the boat draw near
And eight times swing to seaward : at the ninth
The king cried out in joy, and leaped on board,
And loosed the ropes, and seized the steady oars,
And swept beyond his dim and slumbering isles
Into a morn that broke in ruddy gold
Beneath a star.

Full seven times seven leagues
Beyond the last cliff of the utmost isle
Whereon was set the royal will of Lir,
There lay a land fair as the fairest dreams

That ever bard beside a kingly hearth
Built out of flame and song. Hard by the shore
The royal house of Him whose mighty Name
May not be told till first and last are one,
Shone as a pearl upon a pearly breast
Whose rise and fall scarce moved its mirrored shape,
Yet thrilled in vibrant harmony to strains
That floated from an ever open door
And passed from lip to lip of all the winds.
Within the pillared vastness of the hall,
Where neither shadow fell, nor garish light
Smote on its everlasting radiancy,
Stood bard and prince, chanting in unison
The praise of the king's daughter. On the air
The resonant waves flowed forth and softly broke
Around the shores of silence. Hand to hand
The harpers smote their harps and smiting moved
In rhythmic dance. Their locks of midnight hue
Spread out on little winds of melody
That plucked their snowy robes and through their
strings .
Laughed silverly; and bore to him who slipped
From pillar unto pillar to a place
Unseen, apart, low murmurs of a name
Wrapped round with music heard in many a dream.
And as the harpers moved around the hall,
The silent throng swayed slowly side to side,
So filled with joy august and lifted up

That not an eye had sight for him who stood
Alone, apart, and flung across their song
A glad proud glance that searched into its heart
And shone with tremors of a strange delight,
As though the song were sung for one he had loved
Some otherwhere beyond the gates of sleep.
Then when the mingled joy of all that throng
Stood pinnacled upon the utmost height
Of ecstasy, there fell a tremulous hush,
As if the parted lips of all the world
Waited the word to throw to highest heaven
One great glad voice reverberant with acclaim.
But, as upon the breathless hour of eve
The gentle moon ascends the throne of night,
And beams white love that wakens soft desire
In waiting hearts, so in that throbbing pause
Came Niav, daughter of the King whose Name
May not be told till first and last are one.
Then all the pent-up thunder of that voice
Passed into silence and adoring calm
As in their midst she moved. And he who stood
Unseen, apart, marked how about her form
Clothed white as foam her sea-green girdle hung
Like mermaid weed, and how within her wake
There came the sound and odour of the sea,
The swift and silent stroke of unseen wings,
And little happy cries of mating birds.
Whereat there passed across Lir's leaping heart

A billow of white bliss that drew the streams .
From all his veins, so that his paling cheek
Glowed with cool fire and silvery radiance caught
From her moon-fairness, and the surging tides
Of all his being mingled with the tide
Of love that moved across the ecstatic throng
And bent and broke about her as a sea
That bears on glad white shoulders to the shore
A calm triumphant swimmer. Thus she passed
Towards that exalted place whereon no king
Sits, or will sit till first and last are one.
Howbeit, the daughter of the Nameless King
Who stands within the shadow of the world,
Upon the festal eve of that glad day
Which saw her birth, takes there her seat and reigns
One splendid hour. But ere she set her foot
Upon the golden precinct, on the throng
She cast a look of love that found a place
In every heart, but chiefest in the heart
Of him who stood alone, unseen, and joyed
With an immortal joy to watch the blue
Of her calm eyes dusk with the gentle breeze
That passed across her soul, and gleam again
With rapture of rich dusks. Across her brow
She passed a shell-white hand, and swept aside
Jet tresses, as the moonbeam fingers draw
The curtains of great midnight. Then she spake;
And to the ears of him who stood apart,

Unseen, the mellow music of her voice
Came like cool murmurs of the creamy surge
Around the shores of some enchanted isle
Where all the winds of love and hate are furled
And harboured.

Thus she spake: “ From year to year,
Bards, princes! you have loved me with a love
Not less for mine than for the love of Him
Who stands within the shadow of the world
Till first and last are one; and year by year
Our joy has flowed together, as the pools
Among the pebbles, when the flowing tide
Has blent them in the rapture of the sea
And filled them with its fullness. So today
Our hearts have mingled. Yet within my own
There moves the first faint stirring of delight
Past speech, the first low murmurs of a song
Whose end is in the stars. For know you now
The day has come that chaplets all my years
With time’s glad fullness, and I stand—a queen . . .
Not yet! The hour is trembling in the sky,
And some fair shadow falls across my heart
Cast by a light that blinds the eye of noon;
For in that light one stands, and through all worlds
Sighs towards me—and will come. Then, woe is me!
For less than I, can never call me his;
And more than I, must prove himself the more

By strength or stratagem. So, less or more, . . .
Whate'er he be, my joy is mixed with pain.
Yet he will come . . . he is coming . . . he has sent . . .
His dream before him. He will smite high noon,
And bend and break the pillars of all time . . .
That he may make me his, though all the kings
Of all the world rage like a storm-struck sea
Round one great rock whose kingly loneliness
Bends not though all the tempests' lips should blow
The billows to the stars and drown the world!"
She ceased; and from the summit of her joy
Saw Lir . . . and knew . . . and trembled; while
the throng

Gazed question unto question, wavering
"Twixt sorrow and joy that neither went nor came;
While through the door that opened on the sea
There came from rocky ledges happy calls
Of bird to bird that answered love with love.
And Lir would fain have leaped in mighty joy
The barrier of silence to her side,
To kiss the tears from those familiar eyes
That in one look had burned through time and space,
And, unbeheld, had linked them soul to soul,
And smitten two eternities of dream
To one awakened bliss. But, ranked between,
There stood the legions of the Nameless King.
Whereat Lir's heart, vexed, stifled its great cry
For all the strength that, in his seven isles,

Had in a moment compassed all his will,
But being far from this enchanted isle,
Left him but lordship of an empty name
Poised on a vast and ineffectual joy.

Then Niav, half in tears, half smiles, spake thus:
“ Yet for a little while I pause, a child
That babbles on the knees of the kind past,
And strokes its tender cheeks, and looks—as I—
In soft proud eyes that weep—as you, and I—
And smile, and know not which were sweeter pain,
For sorrow and joy are one, and all the past
And all the future mingle in a kiss! ”

Across the throng she looked, then lightly leaped
From step to step, and at the royal place
Stood royally. Whereat the tremulous joy
That rippled round her mellowed into calm
Sonorous murmurs round the radiant throne
As bard and prince and all within the hall,
Save Lir and Niav gazing eye to eye,
Bent low in glad allegiance, as the tide
Falls from its fullness, baring to the view
Two rocks majestic in great loneliness
From whose rapt brows quick wings dart forth and
meet

Midway above the separating sea.

Late in the deepening twilight of a day
That broke on Eire in a glare of gold

Too bright to beat with hammers of high noon
Into fit vessels for the wine of eve,
And now was emptied of all ecstasy
Save the last lees of hope, Lir, by the sea
Paced . . . paused . . . and paced again. Seaward
 he glanced

At each new pause, or, tense and querulous,
Glanced ere he paused, and in the gritty stones
Stumbling struck sudden flame about his feet.
At length he turned and scanned the dimming deep
As though for all the famine of the world
All fullness lay beyond its cloudy verge.
And as Lir stood and gazed, around the shore
Wave after wave hungered from stone to stone,
And sighed themselves into a weedy chasm
Where brown arms rose and fell in mute appeal
To wandering winds that cried against the night
And silence. Then spake Lir within himself:
“ Not yet returned. Perhaps my messengers
Have missed the happy isle where Niav dwells
Beyond that little line of topaz gleam
Where some sweet morning opens wise pure eyes
Upon a world of wisdom . . . Perhaps the King
Who hath no name, glad at my embassage
With gifts outshining all his eyes have seen
In his own realm, and, richer far, my love
For him, and her whose place is at my side,
Holds them in entertainment at his board,

Pleased with great joy that heralds greater far;
And for the sake of that enduring joy
Would hold the transient yet a little while
To taste its new and unreturning sweets . . .
No no! for she would speed them from her isle
With the swift wind of love, bearing the word:
'The King hath spoken: I am thine.' . . . Not yet;
Not even a speck upon the gloomy sea
That I may fix upon, and feel the beat
Of quick ecstatic oars, and in my heart
Hoard up their happy echo. Even now
Night like a grey-blue heron slowly falls
And folds the wings of darkness round the world,—
And she so far, so far! O mystery
That spills all memory on the thirsty sands,
And casts a life, once brimful of delight
In its own self, like some poor empty shell
Into the sea! . . . 'My joy,' she said, 'with pain
Is mixed, whate'er he be.' Nay, pain or grief
Shall touch thee not, since this my realm that stands
Sevenfold in strength, my sevenfold mighty name,
Proclaim me sovereign lord of half the world,
And thus co-equal of the Nameless King
Whose word shall make thee mine, since less or more
I am not. Less? or more? Oh more, far more;
For love is might, and mighty love the more
Adds power to power, and of the eternities
That hinge upon this hour doth make a shell

To shut thee like a pearl within its heart . . .
Less? Infinitely less; for all that was,
All proud accomplishment or chanted fame,
Or jewelled tribute from my utmost isles,
Have through this flame of love passed into dust
To make but one poor ruby for thy brow.
And I who reared an everlasting name
To stand amid the shock of reeling suns,
Am but an echo in a lonely place
To whisper back a name that every wave
And every wind bears hither from thine isle—
And bears my messengers! For now I hear
The jerk of oars that quit the clinging sea,
And, backward swiftly swinging, split the spray
And scatter its flying plumes upon the wind.
They come, my messengers! Around the prow
The foam-fringe glimmers dimly through the dark
Like moonlight through a cloud that overhead
Opens dusk hands, and from a gloomy tower
Lets fall invisible leaves whose silvery pile
Broadens and brightens. Yet, no song! no shout?
Only the deep slow moving of proud men
Confederate in stern purpose, and the hiss
Of serpent waves in sudden frenzied swirl
Around stiff oars held firm lest, at the shock
Of keel and sand, the quiet carven maid
Who gazes ever onward from the prow
Should wince; and now the snarl of running ropes,

And swift sure feet. Hither! . . . come hither!
Well?"

Forth from the crowd of dim hard-breathing men
That closed around the king like some great cloud
Thunderous and vibrant, stepped Lir's foremost lord
And spake: "Thus saith the Nameless King, 'Know
you

That less than she shall never call her his,
And more than she must prove himself the more
By strength or stratagem,—no other word."

Then Lir a moment mused . . . and to his eyes
There came the fire that those around him knew
And joyed to know, and thundered round the king
Portentous of great purpose . . . "Be it so.

Our strength shall burst the rusty gates of dawn,
And make for stratagem a quiet way
Unto my heart's desire. The lumbering wind
Swells purposefully, and with quickening pace
Moves towards that end whereunto every sail
Must ere an hour be set. So haste you! haste!"
Lir said. And straightway through his seven isles
The flame that first had kindled in his eye
Went forth from cape to cape, from hill to hill,
And under the low gloom of starless skies
Made a new sky of unrevolving stars
That spake his will, unquenched till in his wake
A roar of thunder under leaping prows

Carven as torchlit maidens overlaid
With mother-o'-pearl, or serpents ruby-eyed
Flaming, above whose heads great silken sails
Bearing a moon amid the seven seas,
And mighty throats in one exultant shout,
Rolled onward into silence.

In a dawn

Of pearl and topaz, Niav, from a dream
Of yearning hands that groped about the skies
To find her, and swift voices through the night
Whispering her name from star to star close-linked
Into a cincture narrowing round the world,
Arose, and with her watchful maidens passed
From shadow unto shadow to the shore.
Swiftly they sought a cave that to the east
Stood open-eyed, but hidden from all eyes
Save eastward. At its pillared portal, strewn
With shell and seaweed, cool reluctant waves
Bent, solemn and aloof; and chaste sweet winds
Forever fanned a soft eternal fire
That burned but flamed not. Under its glimmering
arch

Lay a deep pool through whose untroubled heart
The tides of all the seas of all the worlds
Had passed, and in the passing purer grown
Because of her who, from its soft green marge,
Slipped like a moonbeam through a happy cloud

That wrapped it in white love. Thence newly
risen

And radiant, Niav from the brightening cave
Stretched gleaming arms to greet the new fair morn
That burned along the sea, and from her feet,
That glistened in moon-whiteness, upward climbed,
And clothed her in yellow gold, and over her brow
Set flickering stars among her wet blown hair.

And as she stood there came a little cry,
Far, faint, that called her heart into her eyes
With memory of swift voices through the night
Whispering her name from star to star close-linked
Into a cincture narrowing round the world.

And as she looked, the cry across the waves
Ran like a flame, and with it glittering sails
Swept north and south; and when she looked again,
Fresh-robed, had compassed all her isle, and surged
One wave of power on the resounding seas,
And ever nearer drew, until she saw
Her lord, and cried: "He is come!" Across the
roar

Of throats that thundered shoreward came her cry
And smote Lir's heart with joy. Whereat he leaped
Forth from his ship, and flung the sea aside,
And, ere the arrows of the Nameless King
Put out the sun, bore Niav on his breast
Unto his ship, and sailed amid a shout
Of triumph homeward!

Thereafter, Lir and Niav
Passed through great love from peace to peace, and
drew
The seven isles in love about their throne . . .
And Mânanaun was born, who, fully grown
To strength made sweet with beauty, took the crown,
And reigned; of whom the bards upon their staves
Have cut great songs, and chant them through the
world.

Note : “The Marriage of Lir and Niav,” like “The Going Forth of Dana,” follows Irish mythological precedents, but has no textual original. In the myths, Mânanaun is the God of the sea.

THE BELL-BRANCH

Shoheen, sho ho:

Birds are homeward winging.

Shoheen, sho ho:

Herdsmen on the hills are singing:

Short the night and long the day.

Come ye weary flocks away.

Folded in deep shadows drowse,

And on long sweet grasses browse

Where the murmuring waters flow.

Shoheen, sho ho:

Hark, the Bell-branch ringing!

Shoheen, sho ho:

Danaans from the hills are singing:

Time is old and earth is grey.
Come ye weary ones away,
Where with white untroubled brows
The immortals dream and drowse,
And the streams of quiet flow.

Shoheen . . . sho ho . . .

Shoheen, sho ho—Irish, *there, here*, equivalent of “*to-and-fro*,” used as a lullaby

The Bell-branch is a device of the Irish fairies to call mortals away from mortal allegiances.

The Tuatha-De-Danaan are Irish personifications of the Cosmic powers of life and light.

CAIRBRE'S HARP

“ My harp is strung with seven strings,
And seven are the songs it sings.
One sings in pain, and one in jest,
And one, more cunning than the rest,
Tells me what secret things are done
From rising until set of sun.
But not forever would I play
That wisdom string. Unending day
Would irk these eyes that seek delight
In shadows of mysterious night;
And silence, that is wisdom's crown,
Might wisdom's self in silence drown.
And so, with ever wavering strain,
I sing in jest, I sing in pain;

Like God who, in divine distress,
Grew tired of awful loneliness;
And flung His arm o'er vibrant space;
And plucked the strings of time and place;
And broke His uttermost repose
With song that through creation goes,
The song of sweet imperfect things
That murmurs through my seven strings."

Note : Cairbre, an ancient Irish King, possessed a magical harp to which legend attributed powers paraphrased above.

YOUNG SAGE TO OLD SCHOLAR

Paraphrased from the Irish

Heap thy learning stone on stone—
It shall grind thee to the bone!
But give wisdom wing awhile—
It shall pluck thee from the pile;
Set thee straightly on thy feet,
Lord of little, but complete!
Sup no more thy bitter curd.
Fling thy brain into a word.
Cast thy heart upon the fire
Of a foolish kind desire.
Spread thy beard upon the wind
Ere thou, wholly deaf and blind,
Fumble round a stony sky
While the Chase goes wildly by!

.Who would scan a wizened page
When, across the Field of Age,
Up and down the Hill of Youth,
Feet are flying after Truth?
Out! and fill a clamorous place
In the ageless endless Chase
After One who speeds alone
Silently from throne to throne
Through the doors of death and birth
In the crumbling house of earth
Where a little space we spend
Between the candle and its end!

A SCHOOLBOY PLAYS CUCHULAIN¹

Way there! for one who hastens forth
To guard the marches of the North,
While Connacht's hosts with flame and brand
Hurl menace towards his native land,
And Macha's Curse on arm and will
Hangs dreadfully from hill to hill!

Way there! Four valorous feet of height,
Twelve long long years of age and fight,
He fronts without a thought of fear
Ten thousand with his wooden spear.

¹ *Cuchulain is the Irish type of the perfect hero. The references are to certain legendary tales*

Soon shall he fling the charging field
Back with his puissant pasteboard shield;
And soon shall haughty Maeve bend down,
A vassal to his tinsel crown!

Way there ! Who laughs has never heard
A hidden trumpet's inner word,
Or glimpsed through those poor arms he bears
The weapons that the spirit wears.
In that wild breast a thousand years
Rise from their ineffectual tears,
And kindle once again the flame
Of freedom at a burning name!
What if for him no flag unfurled
Should shake red battle on the world;¹
On other fields in other mood
The ancient conflict is renewed;
And Michael² and his warring clan
Tramp onward through the heart of man.
At life's loud fires he shall anneal
A subtler blade than transient steel,
When love, invincible in faith,
Shall smile upon the face of death,
And will and heart, as one, conspire
To dare the utmost of desire.
Then shall he with his spirit's lance

¹ July, 1910. Before the Irish Rebellion of 1916.

² Michael is the leader of the angelic host.

Unhorse cold pride and circumstance,
Shake wrong's old strongholds to the ground,
And right's victorious trumpet sound,
And light Earth's ramparts with the gleam
Of Ireland's unextinguished dream
That burned in him who hastened forth
To guard the marches of the North
When Macha's Curse on arm and will
Hung dreadfully from hill to hill!

THE CORNCRAKE

I heard him, faintly, far away,
(Break break! Break break!)

Calling to the dawn of day:
Break break!

I heard him in the yellow morn
(Shake shake! Shake shake!)

Shouting through the rustling corn:
Shake shake!

I heard him near where one lay dead:
(Ache ache!)

Crying among poppies red:
Ache ache! Ache ache!

And where a solemn yew-tree waves
(Wake wake!)

All night he shouts among the graves:
Wake wake! Wake wake!

SPRING CAPRICE BY A ROBIN.

Who, on such a day of spring,
Should be careful how he sing?
Let the overflowing heart
Get a start,
Who shall care if no one knows
How to find a perfect close
To his strain,
When the brain
(Drunk with sun and hyacinth,
Primroses and bursting oak,
And the sowers' puffs of smoke
Over fields of brown),
Stumbling down
A melodious labyrinth,
Somehow, nohow, finds a way out,
Has his say out,—
And begins it all again,
Caring nothing how he sing
When the brain,
Wild with spring,
Gives a start
To his mad, melodious, overflowing heart?

Borodale, Wexford

SPRING RONDEL BY A STARLING

I clink my castanet,
And beat my little drum;
For spring at last has come,
And on my parapet
Of chestnut, gummy-wet,
Where bees begin to hum,
I clink my castanet,
And beat my little drum.
“Spring goes,” you say; “suns set.”
So be it! Why be glum?
Enough, *the spring has come*;
And without fear or fret
I clink my castanet
And beat my little drum.

AT A HOLY WELL

He dragged his knees from flag to flag,
And prayed for health with awe-struck brow;
Then hung his ill’s discarded rag
On the o’erhanging hawthorn bough.

And in the adoring hush that fell,
I, from the form set inly free,
Knelt at my heart’s most holy well,
And worshipped mine own mystery.

Templemanaghan, Kerry.

A DONEGAL SKETCH

“ God save you kindly, sir,” she said,
And opened wide the low half-door.
Her hair was white, her eyes were red,
Her feet were naked on the floor.

But such a heart beat in her breast
To Ireland’s friendly heritage,
It set her worst past others’ best,
And scattered poverty and age.

We sat beside her fire of turf
And talked of crops and fairy-lore,
Weather and dress. The Atlantic surf
Far off made muffled roar on roar.

Half stifling reminiscent moans
She gossiped of the famine times;
Then sang in thin and wavering tones
Some ancient nameless poet’s rhymes;

Until the slow and scented night
Silenced the voice of gnat and frog,
And dimmed to unfamiliar sight
The pathway home across the bog.

She rose, and surely as a bat
Marked various pathways through the dark:
This "roundabout and aisy;" that
" No longer than a beagle's bark."

" Goodbye," she said, at parting loth:
" God bless ye, ma'am ": a warm hand-shake:
" An' sure if He does bless ye both,
It matters not what road ye take."

Breaghy, Ballymore.

HIGH AND LOW

He stumbled home from Clifden fair
With drunken song and cheeks aglow.
Yet there was something in his air
That spoke of kingship long ago.
I sighed, and inly cried
With grief that one so high should fall so low.

He snatched a flower and sniffed its scent,
And waved it towards the sunset sky.
Some old sweet rapture through him went
And kindled in his bloodshot eye.
I turned and inly burned
With joy that one so low should rise so high.

Clifden, Connemara

OPTIMISM—GALWAY STYLE.

Thanks to the Lord and the Blessed Virgin for all
the grace
They gave me, as girl and woman, though now my
wrinkled face
Is withered and cracked like a leaf; and my back,
that was flat as a book,
Is doubled in two like a gapped and rusted reaping
hook.
And there is the bed in the corner where the young
girl died in the spring,
And the older went in the winter. Indeed 'twas a
lonesome thing
To be missing the stir of my daughters and the strong
arm quick at the churn.
'Tis not easy for one both to dig and to watch that
the bread won't burn,
When himself is out on the mountain to gather the
sheep in the fog,
And the turf that was cut for the winter is lying wet
on the bog.
But I daren't complain, though I miss them, for sure
they were only a loan,
And the Lord in His merciful wisdom has wanted
back His own.
It was bad on myself and my man, but it might have
been twice as bad;

And I'm thankful to God and His Mother for the share of joy that we had.

Sure, things will be always somehow; and why should we lose our rest,

But make the best of the worst, for the worst is maybe the best.

Ballinaboy, Clifden.

A FLAIL-SONG

Now scythe and spade aside are laid,
And autumn shade will soon be here.

Come, fetch the flail down from its nail,
And fill the pail with water clear.

See, all the floor is covered o'er
With golden store of ripened grain.

Now, take your places left and right,
And swing and smite with might and main.

Ho! strike in time, like bells in chime,
Or poet's rhyme in jocund lays;
For gathered here are health and cheer
To chase all fear in dreary days.

So swing with skill and right goodwill,
And bring the *biltawn* briskly down.
Knee-deep in chaff our drink we'll quaff,
And laugh at coming winter's frown.

But let us raise our reverent praise
For summer days, for shower and sun;
For strength and zest, for labour blessed,
And hope of rest when labour's done.
Then smite and swing! Like bird on wing
Our *suistes* sing a shrill refrain,
Till to the door the barn flows o'er
With golden store of garnered grain!

Biltawn, the upper loose striking part of the flail.

Suiste (Irish, pron. almost soos-chee), a flail.

A GIPSY DANCE IN KERRY

The fiddle squeaked by Ventry shore.
The fiddler beat with heavy boot;
And on the road the kitchen door
Lay out to tempt the jigging foot;

When suddenly across the ditch
Two women sprang with eager eyes,
So like, you knew not which was which,
Being both accoutred vagrant-wise

With shawl and clout and hair gone wild,
And loud with mutual brazen jest;
But one was heavy with a child,
And one a child held to her breast.

The fiddle yelped, the fiddler beat;
The gipsies jumped upon the board
And danced with such most frantic feet
The gaping village clapped and roared.

But while the dancers danced and smiled,
One sound went deeper than the rest—
The whimper of a frightened child
That leaped against a leaping breast

Till round the bend a frowning priest
Came jaunting down the Dingle road.—
The fiddle choked; the dancers ceased:
With shame and sweat their faces glowed.

But I, who from my window watched,
Upraised no voice to join rebuke,
As those wild creatures, sunned and patched,
Their pathway westward slowly took.

For deep in life's most hidden page
I read the joy whose primal urge
Through myriad form and countless age,
Up-yearning from the plasmic surge

To find fit Bride for Him who weds
Creation with a holy kiss,
Steadfast in single purpose treads
Unnumbered various paths to bliss.

I shall not ask the giddy gnat
To outblow the trumpets of the storm,
Nor count the chirping staggering bat
More praiseful than the quiet worm.

Nay, from sea's depth to mountain-top
Joy at each step finds fitting throat
To drown the voice that fain would stop
Her gamut to a single note.

Nor shall I chide those vagrant hearts
That dance, nor heed a whimpering child,
While Nature plays her stormy parts
Through human dreams in ruins piled;

And on the floor of east and west
Spins in her dance the joyous Earth,
The infant Present at her breast,
The Future quickening to its birth.

THE PRIEST'S LAKE

Under the bridge, with noisy rout,
The Atlantic fills the quiet lake . . .
A pause . . . a turn . . . then with a shout
Seaward the brimming waters break.

“ Open thy gates,” the Spirit saith,
“ O Soul! My wave thy shore shall sweep,
Then back across the pause of death
Draw thee with shoutings to the deep! ”

Ardbear, Connemara

WHY THE GRASS IS SHORT IN CONNEMARA

“ Michael Walsh, beyond the bog,
Leaves his cattle to his dog,
Leaves his dog a marrow-bone,
Seats himself upon a stone,
And ‘ Let you not think,’ says he,
‘ Eyesight tells of all’s to see! ’
Then, his eyes turned in his head,
Michael talks to people dead:
Folk that once with friendly hands
Passed the pipe from mouth to mouth,
Sharp-tongued men from northern lands,
Men, soft-spoken, from the south;
Creatures of the delving kin,
Born and buried near the sod,
Bearing little mortal sin,
Little of the grace of God.
God, who pities men who moil,
Pities these; and of His will,

Sets them not to angel toil
Past their little human skill.
‘ Ah! ’ the Father smiling says,
‘ I have bards and harps enough.
In the gaps of sodden days
You have handled silent stuff
Dumb with song; for out of dearth
You have clothed the naked earth;
Clothed and fed and put to school
Powers made purposeful by rule.
Wild things by the wayside born
You have changed to blessed corn
That makes glad the homes of man.
Comrades of My cosmic plan!
Shapers where My vision stirs!
My divine artificers!
Many paths lead on to Praise:
You shall go familiar ways.
Children of the wind and sun,
Do as you have always done! ’
‘ And,’ says Michael, ‘ there they go,
Ghosts of cattle, ghosts of men,
Up the hill and down again,
As they used to long ago.’
And betimes at dead of night,
When the dog-star blazes bright,
And the little wisps of fog
Glide like ghosts across the bog,

I can hear thin whispered words,
And a sound like moving herds.
Then I shut the door, and think:—
Beast and man must eat and drink!
If it be the Almighty's will
That among our stony ground
Food for ghostly herds be found,
Let them eat and drink their fill;
Let them feast and have their sport—
And I sometimes think, thinks I,
Maybe that's the reason why
Connemara grass is short! ”

HOSPITALITY

From the Irish, seventh to tenth century

O King of stars that watch the night!
Whether my house be dark or bright,
Its door to none shall bolted be,
Lest Christ should close his house to me.

And if thy house shall hold a guest,
And aught from him thou hast suppressed,
Not all to him the wrong is done:—
Thou hast concealed from Mary's Son.

HOW THE MOUNTAINS CAME TO BE

A bird once came and said to me:
“ Hear how the mountains came to be.

“ An angel from his crystal sphere
Fell to the earth. A chilly fear
Shot through his wings from tip to tip,
For there was neither boat nor ship,
Mountain nor stream, nor maid nor man,
Far as the angel’s eye could scan;
Dead flatness only could he see
Before the mountains came to be.
He stretched his wings to fly away;
But round his feet the oozy clay
Gripped fast, and held him to the ground.
He stretched and strove, until a sound
Went through him from he knew not where,
And said: ‘ The only way is prayer! ’
He dropped his wings and raised his eyes,
And sent his soul into the skies.
He prayed and prayed; and as he prayed
A wind among his plumage played
And bore him towards his natal sphere.
Around his feet from far and near
There came a sound that seemed to say:
‘ Pray on! pray on! We too would pray!
Thy prayer has touched the sleeping Powers!

Pray on: thy prayer shall yet be ours!
We too have wings that pine for flight!
We too have eyes that long for light! ’
Upwards he moved, and still his eyes
Were fastened on the distant skies;
And, as he rose towards heaven dim,
He drew the earth up after him.
About his feet the oozy clay
Gripped fast, but could not stop or stay
His course, till on his skyey stair
He paused beyond the need of prayer;
While from the earth, beneath, around,
There rose a tumult of glad sound.
The angel turned the sound to seek,
And lo! his foot was on a peak
That fell away to where the world
Lay like a painted flag unfurled
And shaken out from sea to sea,—
And thus the mountains came to be! ”

So said the bird; and what the masque
Of meaning hid I meant to ask;
But off he flew before I knew:
And yet I think the tale is true,
If one could only hear aright,
And see with something more than sight.

ETAIN THE BELOVED

To Penrose Morris

I

Strong in the strength that finds in gentleness
A way to peace, King Eochaidh on the throne
Of Erin sits. Around his footstool press
Clansmen and chiefs. Some wind of thought has blown
Their eyes to flame. Some purpose, in the stress
Of travailing tongues, to birth finds not a way:
What all would utter, none has wit to say.

Into their midst one came, a wrinkled bard
Upon whose flowing hair Wisdom had laid
Her gift of silver. On those faces, scarred
From old forgotten fights, he looked, and weighed
The meaning in their eyes, though sorely marred;
And from the tangled fibre of their thought
Into the web of speech their purpose wrought.

“ Thy word, O King, has passed by hill and dale
Throughout all Erin, bidding to the Feast
Of Tara all thy people, with the tale
Of tribute due from greatest and from least.
Nor should this word than others less prevail,
But that the herald-spear thy will hath sent,
Against the shield of custom has been bent.

“Thou knowest, O King, that from most ancient years
No chieftain wifeless rules for thee the land,
Or mateless at a festival appears;
But fixed in all experience doth stand:
And thus, made master of all human fears,
Fears not, but strongly round the camp-fires goes,
Full sharer of thy people’s joys and woes.

“ Equal in yoke and honour, as the day
And night, that are but breathings of the soul,
They on life’s crooked journey take their way,
Diverse in gift; in essence one and whole.
This is the custom, King! Yet custom may,
If but of man, be as a smith who twists
An iron chain to bind upon his wrists.

“ But custom may, if fashioned to the Law
That made the world, be as the straitened string
From which the Master of the Feast may draw
Majestic speech, a living, wondrous thing
To rid the brow of pale contention’s flaw,
And, passing like the honey-cup along,
Gather their wandering lips to one great song.

“ And such the custom that thy people plead:
For when of old the deathless Lord of Life,
Dagda, came forth, and knew the immortal need
That burned within his heart, he took to wife

Dana, the Mother of all human seed.
In her his breath found music and a name.
In her his fire has blossomed into flame.

“ Throughout the world that fire and music run.
One sings within the maiden’s wondering heart:
One stirs the veins of manhood, as the sun
Sets the spring’s fingers thrilling with the smart
Of keen, ecstatic life that’s but begun.
In every seed that breaks and wind that blows,
Each in the other seeks and finds repose.

“ Wherefore, O King, since thou art yet unwed,
And thus in kingship standest incomplete,
Unsatisfied in heart, from whence are fed
The streams of power and wisdom, it is not meet
That unto thee thy people bow the head,
And here thy sovereignty with tribute own
Till thou hast set a Queen upon thy throne.”

He ceased, and all the faces of the crowd
Shone with the light that kindles when the boon
Of speech has eased the heart; as when a cloud
Falls from the labouring shoulder of the moon,
And all the world stands smiling silver-browed.
King Eochaidh for a moment bent his head
In thought; then smiling he arose and said:

“ I am not careless of the ancient need
That moves your minds. Within my own it moves
Like a long-hidden, unforgotten seed
The spring has touched uneasily; like hooves
Long captive, when the trumpet has decreed
A royal pilgrimage, and in the liss
They dance to taste the highway’s ringing bliss.

“ So have I watched for that sure sign that fills
The horn of fate, that, bending this our realm
Unto the Will that works behind our wills,
It may remain; as, when storms overwhelm,
And leafy spray whirls over the roaring hills,
The swaying pine bends as the storm wars by,
And lives to shake proud arms against the sky.

“ But now the horn is full, the hour is here.
Our wills as one move onwards to their end.
Here now I lift on high the royal spear,
And thus through Erin proclamation send:
‘ Search for the promised maiden far and near
Whom the high Gods have destined at my side
To reign.’ Go forth. The King awaits his bride.

“ She shall be found in some most quiet place
Where Beauty sits all day beside her knee
And looks with happy envy on her face;
Where Virtue blushes, her own guilt to see,

And Grace learns new sweet meanings from her grace;
Where all that ever was or will be wise
Pales at the burning wisdom of her eyes.

“ When you at last, far off like worshippers
Within some holy circle, bow your heads,
You shall await till on that face of hers
A smile like spring’s first morning slowly spreads;
And when her lip with wondrous music stirs,
Bear hither like the wind her deathless name,
That I may light my heart at its white flame.”

Scarce had he ceased when from the royal tent
Broke the full tide of their loud ecstasy,
And through the woods like summer thunder went,
Full of great rumour of mighty things to be
That died far off like twilight breezes spent.
Then sang the bard in hidden wisdom skilled:
Thus is the purpose of the Gods fulfilled.

*Lift now the hands that may not bless
A wifeless feast, a queenless throne,
A court or council womanless,
Or life, one-limbed and sideways grown,
That holds the hands that may not bless.*

*The starry Virgin of the east
Steps up the sky to lead the sign
Where most has kissed and mixed with least,*

*And one-in-twain life's torches shine
Behind the Virgin of the east.*

*Then lift the hands that gladly bless
Full life, to life's great fullness grown,
A power to stand through shock and stress,
And rear an everlasting throne
Held high on hands that gladly bless.*

Then on a night when on his hearth the gleam
Of crackling faggots flung a wavering glow
Along his red-yew roof from beam to beam
Like glancing eyes, King Eochaidh to and fro
Turned on his couch, dreaming a happy dream
Of snapping stems, and crisp leaves crushed by feet
With high desire made musical and fleet.

Out of the fire a swift and slender shaft
Of yellow flame pierced through the King's dropped
lids,
And woke a murmur of bees whose eager craft
Rifled the treasures of blossomy pyramids;
Whereat the King, raising his hand, low laughed,
Then passed like a worn swimmer on the sweep
Of strong waves toward the unfathomed gulf of sleep.

At length in that white hour when dewy wings
Stir with new day's delight, there came a sound

As though a passion of voices and smitten strings
Mingled and swelled and flew along the ground,
Till, at the utmost of its triumphings,
Through the King's sleep and on his door the dawn
Broke, and a mighty shout: "Etain! Etain!"

II

Thereafter, on a morning rich with spring,
When round his feet new-opened flowers looked up
Wide-eyed and wet at some most wondrous thing,
And crystal draughts from many an odorous cup
Were spilled by winds in playful rioting,
King Eochaidh stood beside a quiet shore,
Dumb with a joy he had not known before.

From league to league alone his path had lain
On windy hills, through forests dark, or deep
In dank, sonorous glens. Through every vein
A burning joy had drunk the mists of sleep,
And sung "Etain, Etain," till the refrain
Irked, and he slept, and when he sprang awake
Saw that which made his heart with rapture shake.

There by the sea, Etain his destined bride
Sat unabashed, unwitting of the sight
Of him who gazed upon her gleaming side,
Fair as the snowfall of a single night;

Her arms like foam upon the flowing tide;
Her curd-white limbs in all their beauty bare,
Straight as the rule of Dagda's carpenter.

Her cheeks were like the foxglove when it glows
At noon: her eyes blue as the hyacinth.
Like moonlight struck to marble, nobly rose
Her neck upon her shoulder's polished plinth;
And like the light that swiftly comes and goes
Through breaking waves, among her hair her hands
Broke into wavy gold its plaited strands.

Then came her maidens, bright and blossoming
With beauty, and before her beauty bowed,
And stood around her in a happy ring
To robe her starry splendour like a cloud.
And as her hair they twined, the hidden king
Scarce knew if on her lips, that knew no wrong,
Or in his own hushed heart he heard this song.

*The king comes riding from the north,
From battles won, with marching men.
Ah, whose white eager arms go forth
To bid him welcome home again
When he comes riding from the north?*

*The king comes riding from the south,
And halts beside the royal liss.*

*Ah, whose the happy smiling mouth
That gives and takes a long warm kiss
When he comes riding from the south?*

*The king comes riding from the east.
O night how dark! O way how long!
Ah, whose dear eyes shall light the feast?
Ah, who shall lift his heart with song
When he comes riding from the east?*

*The king comes riding from the west,
And smiles unto himself, and sighs.
Ah, whose the white and easeful breast
Where he shall close his kingly eyes
When he comes riding from the west?*

Small wonder now that Eochaидh's leaping heart
Strained like a hound in leash: yet through his bliss
There passed a thin cold blade with sudden smart
Of doubt that he but dreamed, of dread that this
Was but a vision that would soon depart:
But when the song had ceased, there stood the maid
Flushed with keen joy, and like a queen arrayed.

A mantle of bright purple, waving, wound
Her form, and from her shoulders white as milk
Fell in reluctant folds and touched the ground.
Upon her breast the flash of emerald silk—

As though the glory of earth had wrapped her round—
Mixed with the glow of red embroidered gold
That seemed with light her body to enfold.

A sudden breeze came singing from the sea
And broke with sunlight through the leafy shade.
Then came King Eochaидh forth, and on his knee
Bent low before the silent, trembling maid.
“The king,” he said, “has come, and kneels to thee,
Foredoomed to share the burden of his throne,
And glorify its glory with thine own.”

Then through her frame a gentle tremor went
And lit her face with exquisite swift fire
That woke forgotten dreams, whose shaken scent
Sweetened the quiet winds of her desire
With some divine, unuttered ravishment,
Some earnest of great doom that filled her heart
With sorrow, joy’s majestic counterpart.

Upon his head she gently laid her hand,
And said: “Arise! To thee my heart has bowed
When minstrel after minstrel, tired and tanned,
Has supped beside our hearth, and sung the proud
High song that bears thy greatness through the land.
For thee from life’s clear dawn my love remained
Fixed, and at length to thee I have attained.”

III

Across the woods of Meath the bird of day
Fell from the boughs of noon with bleeding wing,
While dark-browed Balor strode the eastern way,
And scattered darkness from his cloudy sling,
Till at his feet the hosts of Erin lay
Smitten with sleep. Around their dreams he cast
The chains wherewith he binds his prisoners fast.

From dawn till dark, in many a hero-game
Glad eyes had flashed, or bent in pride august
To hear the chant of some undying name
Whose deeds were strong as wine. Anon the dust
Of festive feet circled in wild acclaim
Around the royal place where, side by side,
Sat Eochaidh and Etain his new-made bride.

Now ancient Sleep, with Silence for his queen,
Reigns over palaces of stately fir
That drowse in curtained moonlight's misty sheen.
Within, the arras hardly seems to stir
Its languorous folds of purple, blue and green,
Whose colours part or mix, as rise and fall
The pine fire's odorous gleams on roof and wall.

No sound, no life, save where with soft salute
The wide-eyed sentinels a moment wait
And listen sidelong to the passing bruit

Of ghostly winds, that murmur at their state
And pass, with peevish cry and soundless foot,
Where the dead fly upon the waveless moat
Makes of the dead dropped leaf a funeral boat.

Yet in the midst of silence so profound,
One stirred his rushy couch as though in pain;
For through his dreams a torrent of swift sound
Stumbled in foam about his echoing brain,
And all his thought in loud confusion drowned,
And bore him towards a dim and threatening steep
That flung its shadow on a writhing deep.

Then like the sun obscured by valley smoke,
With some vague trouble glooming in his eye,
Ailill, the brother of the king, awoke
And scanned the portents of the morning sky,
Till on his mind a mellowing radiance broke,
And in his heart there dawned a wondrous face
That lit his world with Love's exalted grace.

Often in dreams a shadow by his side
Had sung of one who came in some great hour
With Love—and woe. Now came his brother's bride;
And when he bent before her in her bower,
Within his heart the shadow rose and cried,
And crying fled, while Ailill's being shook,
Stricken with joy and sorrow in a look.

Among the clamours of the festal time
His love for ease he hid, again pursued,
Finding a solace in the chanted rhyme
Of ancient bards, or youths in merry mood
Where angry words were counted as a crime;
And fireside friendship staunched his hungry sighs
When she no more was banquet for his eyes.

But when the marriage festival was past,
And restless day gave place to torturing night,
His captive passion burst its chains, and cast
Its ardours from his brain in living light.
Then like the thin voice of a spell-raised blast,
A dissonant note from hidden harp-strings drawn
Troubled the dreams of Eochaidh and Etain.

By day the dream had faded to a mist
In some far-folded valley of the mind;
But when, heart-charmed in evening's amethyst,
The labouring world grew wonderfully kind,
And upturned lips by brooding love were kissed,
Like silent rain in summer twilight spilled,
A wandering thought King Eochaidh touched and
chilled.

Meanwhile with steps that would and would not shun
Bliss craved and spurned; with tongue that might
not speak

The pain that some strange sweetness now had won,
Ailill moved to and fro; and soon his cheek
Was lined like rainless fields in summer sun;
And day by day his passion's famished flame
Nourished itself upon his wasting frame.

In vain the king's diviners daily strove
To find the spring of Ailill's gathering ill.
In vain Etain by stream and murmuring grove
Sought for the shadowy hand that held his will.
And when dark Balor cracked his whip, and drove
His winter herd across the bounds of day,
Ailill upon his couch in weakness lay.

So when a year had passed, and through the land
The king went forth on royal pilgrimage,
Unto Etain he gave his last command
That she, his brother's sickness to assuage,
Withhold no gift, but give with regal hand;
And should chill death blow out his flickering blaze,
His funeral-stone with honour she should raise.

IV

From day to day Etain with eager thought
Outran sick Ailill's fleetest-footed needs;
From sun and wind a subtle medicine caught,
And charmed swift healing from the fresh-strewn reeds

Upon his floor, which her own hands had brought
From ferny hollows, where cool waters laughed
That Ailill from her cup thirstily quaffed.

Yet with each dawn that came with growing power
There grew a cloudy thought in Ailill's mind
That gloomed the joy of health's returning hour,
And put a sigh in evening's gentle wind,
And touched with ill-timed frost life's opening flower,
And turned to poverty the proffered wealth
In hands that wrought his sickness and his health.

And she, in service, found a hidden way
To strange new meanings in the eyes of life;
And reached a joy beyond the shrill affray
Of horns and harps loud with the songs of strife
Or little triumphs of a passing day;
And grasped, in giving, life's most perfect gift—
Love that is raised by that which it doth lift.

So moved the twain through sunshine barred with
gloom,
Finding in each twin solace and despair.
He, like a frail and gently tended bloom,
Grudged each day's health that took him past her care;
And she, deep-shadowed by approaching doom,
Watching his need of her grow less and less,
Sickened with grief her lips dare not express.

Tossed thus on hidden billows of the soul,
And swept by winds that warred against the will,
They drained the little draught in life's poor bowl,
And all unwitting wrought each other ill;
Until at last, stung past the heart's control,
Marking Etain's white brow and pensive eye,
Thus Ailill broke the silence with a cry.

“ O bitter joy! O sorrow passing sweet!
O blossoming life that leads to love's pale death!
O gain that speeds to loss on laggard feet!
O living voice that kills the word it saith!
O cooling touch that kindles quenchless heat!
How shall I all my heart's dear burden speak,
Or how keep silent at thy paling cheek?

“ I love thee, Queen Etain, but in such wise
As never man loved woman heretofore:
Not with the love that lives upon her eyes,
And counts her breast the summit and the shore
Of all desire, and with tempestuous sighs
Flings to the winds the spoils of reason's thrift
In barter for her body's utmost gift.

“ My love, O Queen! is that serener kind
Whose word outruns the lumbering wain of speech,
And springs in light from mind to answering mind;
And takes its bliss beyond the body's reach,

Thought mixed with thought, as sunlight with sweet
wind;

And crowds the ways, where human sorrow pleads,
With generations of exalted deeds.

“ Ah, then take back the life that thou hast spent
In vain since thou dost slay and heal my heart;
And let quick death beat down my failing tent,
And its lone habitant be blown apart
Through the wide wastes of night’s black firmament,
Where move the Powers in whose dread hands may be
The source and end of dreams and destiny.

“ There past the chain of hours my faithful ghost
May through thy dreams move silently and dim;
And needing then the least, may serve thee most;
Or crying seaward from life’s misty rim,
Call forth thy heart beyond its mortal coast;
Happy if in thy spirit’s wakening sigh
My name one murmured moment live and die.”

Thus Ailill spoke; and like a summer shower
His eager words, spilt on her heart and brain,
Stirred many a leaf to life, and many a flower;
And sank beneath her spirit’s thirsty plain,
Till hidden springs, touched with a strange new power,
Welled in her eyes with flash of sudden streams
From hills that crowned some far-off world of dreams.

Clear-visioned in her meditative eye
Rolled the great world, and lo! a silent moth
Shredded its mighty frame, till down the sky
It fluttered like a poor discarded cloth
From some dead face flung out by hands that
die;
And thinned like vapours round the lips of day,
And like a breath passed utterly away.

And as it passed she knew that nevermore
Life would be life again; yet in her mind
Lurked the dim fear of one who leaves the shore,
And on the sightless hazard of the wind
Moves into doubt and darkness. O'er and o'er
She turned her thought, till softly on her ear
There broke a song a bard was chanting near.

*Because the strong are fallen low,
Who deems that Strength himself is slain?
Through depth and height his arm shall go,
And he shall rear his house again,
Although the strong are fallen low.*

*Because the living all are dead,
Who deems that Life has found a grave?
Among the stars she lifts her head,
She dances lightly on the wave,
Although the living all are dead.*

*Because the beautiful has passed,
Was Beauty but a passing word?
Behold, the dust through chaos cast
With lovelier loveliness is stirred,
Although the beautiful has passed.*

*And if earth's lovers love amiss,
Who deems that Love has perished quite?
Lo, cloudy lips the mountains kiss
And day is bosomed on the night,
Although earth's lovers love amiss.*

Swiftly and silently her thought's faint wing
Sought between wind and wind a certain way;
For one was keen with glad awakening
In perfumed morn of some ecstatic day;
And one was loud with song, and quivering string,
And all life's pageantry and noisy breath
Wherewith men strive to drown the voice of death.

Then said Etain: " King Eochaidh in his might
Drew me to bonds of happiness; but thou
Art as a voice that calls across the night
To where some dawn blows freshly on the brow,
And love with love moves freely as the light,
Mingling in happy dreams their shadowy wings
Beyond these perishing substantial things.

“ Ah, me, the pain in joy, the joy in grief!
Who tells the end when once has moved the foot?
Thy hand is on my life’s new-opened leaf:
Who knows whose hand may pluck its ripened fruit?
To thee—and past, the journey may be brief.
Yet I the king’s behest shall all fulfil:
‘ Nothing withhold to heal my brother’s ill.’

“ So in the gaze of dawn and wondering flowers
We shall keep tryst by stream and whispering tree;
Perchance to win from life’s controlling powers
The healing of thy heart’s infirmity;
Perchance—” “ Oh! speed the hazard of those hours,”
He cried, “ that blind the flame of low desire
In the white light of Love’s transmuting fire.”

V

Hard by the swift-winged star, the moth-like moon
Sheds golden dust on waves of day that ebb
Into the deep beyond life’s wan lagoon.
The spider Night now spins his monstrous web,
And spots the dark with many a pale cocoon
Hung in his vaporous cave, whose phantoms creep
In visions round the heavy brain of sleep.

Yet one among the sleepers never turns
To ease his shoulder of the weight of night;

But with the shield of sweet oblivion spurns .
Those wandering shafts that tease with sound and sight;
Till in a quiet, deep as kingly urns
In buried places, Ailill deadly lies,
Blind to the spreading signal of the skies.

Now the thick dark, that pressed Etain's calm face
Like softest wool, thins out, and moves, and lifts;
And like a memory's vague recovered trace
The silent world, looming through cloudy rifts,
Floats greyly on the grey abyss of space,
Then slowly forms, and stands at last in light
Built on the crumbled ruins of the night.

Soon on a cloud o'erhung with heliotrope
Day's harp is lifted, wire on golden wire;
And now great Dagda's burning fingers grope
From string to string, then reaching high and higher
Unto the utterance of some eager hope,
Break through the vibrant silences, and spring
Into the myriad voice of leaf and wing.

Somewhere the snipe now taps his tiny drum;
The moth goes fluttering upwards from the heath;
And where no lightest foot unmarked may come,
The rabbit, tiptoe, plies his shiny teeth
On luscious herbage; and with strident hum

The yellow bees, blustering from flower to flower,
Scatter from dew-filled cups a sparkling shower.

The meadow-sweet shakes out its feathery mass;
And rumorous winds, that stir the silent eaves,
Bearing abroad faint perfumes as they pass,
Thrill with some wondrous tale the fluttering leaves,
And whisper secretly along the grass
Where gossamers, for day's triumphal march,
Hang out from blade to blade their diamond arch.

Forth comes Etain, and with a little cry
Scatters the councils of the feathery brood;
And meets unblenched the red sun's winkless eye
That hawk-like hangs above the quivering wood;
And moves with stately step and head on high
Towards a secluded place—where one doth wait
Silent and imperturbable as fate.

Sweetly the wizard palms of morning sleek
Her brow with spells; and when a butterfly
Brushes with soft familiar wing her cheek,
Through the deep woods she hears a ghostly sigh,
As if a hidden God were fain to speak
An ancient ageless love that, fold by fold,
Wraps her with joy in throbbing arms of old.

Now is her sandalled foot upon the edge
Of a loud-leaping stream, that flings its damp

To cool the sorrel shaking on its ledge
Under the squirrel's pine, and in a swamp
Goes dumb among the heron-haunted sedge,
Where the kingfisher, in a moment's view,
Flashes and fades, a flame of sudden blue.

At length she stands within the appointed place,
Where leafy boughs in odorous dusk are blent.
But wherefore now across her trancéd face
Pass the quick fingers of bewilderment,
And doubt on doubt like shadows shadows chase?
Faintly she speaks: "Ailill I came to see.
Who art thou—for thou art yet art not he?"

From her soft eye no loosened glances tell
Desire or dread, to him whose cloudless gaze
Knows from what heights of old her footsteps fell
Out of clear light, into this web of days
And nights and mystery inscrutable,
And marks how in the calm of inner power
She moves unmoved to meet her destined hour.

"Etain," he whispered, and again, "Etain."
Such utter love went throbbing through her name
That nigh beyond her doubt her foot had gone;
Yet stood she wavering like a lonely flame
Outburning night, that feels the shake of dawn;
Then said: "Thy name, that doubt aside he cast?"
"Midir," he answered, "come for thee at last."

"Midir?" she echoed, "Midir?" and the sound
Smote upon hidden doors, and roused from sleep
Faint eyes that dreamed, vague hands that groped
around

The thought behind her thought, and from the deep
Beneath her thought climbed upwards to the bound
Whose shadowy marge like midnight gloom is cast
Between the passing moment and the past.

Then Midir said: "For no poor worm's desire,
Nor aught of earth, thou comest, O beloved!
But for another's good thy thoughts conspire;
And far from self thy feet have hither moved
To the high purpose of the sacred fire
That burns thine upward path past joy and pain,
Through birth, through life, through death, to me again."

Then asked she all bewildered: "Who art thou
Whose eyes have read my soul?" And answered he:
"Thine am I by the immemorial vow
That made thee mine, beloved! eternally,
When, for a bride-price, on thy peerless brow
I set a diadem beyond the worth
Of all the crowns of all the queens of earth."

Swiftly her thought divining: "Where, and when,
And wherefore parted, thou, beloved! shalt know.
That land which gleams in the rapt poet's ken,

Set in a sea that has no ebb or flow,
Beyond the spear-cast of the dreams of men,
Is mine, and from all changings far withdrawn
There spreads the realm of Midir—and Etain.

“ And there we loved, till that almighty Power
Who set the heavens wheeling with a nod,
Blew thee, a butterfly, from flower to flower,
Until, beyond our realm, a splendid God
Knew thee and cherished in a blossomy bower,
And nightly thy fair form in purple laid,
And at thy side his couch of slumber made.

“ But thee again the breath of tempest found,
And swept thee forth, and whirled from field to field,
And dashed thee where a roar of festal sound
Shook brazenly doffed helm and resting shield,
And flung thee in a cup that passed around
To one who drank it deep in bridal mirth—
And thou wert born a daughter of the earth.

“ From year to year life’s pleasures round thee played,
And fell behind the question of thine eyes
That searched the mysteries of leafy shade,
And the blue heron sailing in the skies
Cutting the silence with the rusty blade,
His voice; and sought to spy the subtile might
That killed your gathered iris in a night.

“ Ah, soon I saw sweet longing on thy face,
And love’s compelling poppy on thy mouth,
And watched thee robe thy maiden blossoming grace
And dream a king came riding from the south;
Yet, in thy sigh in Eochaidh’s royal place,
Unseen I saw the waft of hidden wings
Set past these perishing substantial things.

“ For thou wert born for love whose windless sail
Moves on great deeps beyond life’s shallow range.
Love linked in flesh with failing flesh shall fail:
Love knit in thought with changing thought shall
change,
Nor all desire against slow Time prevail;
For that old worm all dreams shall gnaw and rend,
And love that finds an end, itself shall end.

“ Oh! not for thee the little irking chain
That frets the bark on life’s expanding bole;
Nor love that maketh free, though it contain
All earth’s white loves and thee supreme and sole
Beloved beneath all heaven; for who shall gain,
Since between love and love most subtly mixed
Untrodden silence stands forever fixed!

“ My love would brood upon the holy thing
Within thine inmost being folded far,
Till it at length come forth on perfect wing

To brush with sweet eclipse the morning star,
And in high heaven its throbbing rapture sing,
Filling the universe with golden sound
Of love immortal, measureless, unbound!

“ How shall immortal love find mortal bliss,
Or measureless be bound in narrow speech,
Or free and forge the bondage of a kiss?
Nay, but its end is ever out of reach,
Its life, of fairer life the chrysalis;
And all its days, desirable and fleet,
But prints of unseen Beauty’s passing feet.

“ Ah! love is thine whose all-transfusing sun
Burns out the mystery of life and death;
And all thine hours but blossom unto one
That us in utter bondage compasseth.
Now to that timeless hour Time’s footsteps run
To rear our throne, whose foot shall never know
The chafe of life’s eternal ebb and flow.

“ And he whose heart long time was scarred and
swept
By hungering winds that robbed him of repose,
Wrapt in deep joy, beyond his joy has slept
Into a passionless calm, that wakes and knows
Love’s highest bliss in honour stainless kept.
Farewell, and when a little while has flown
I come again.” He ceased. She stood alone. . . .

Far through the morn the horn of Eochaидh blows,
Outspeeding heralds hot with glad return.
From post to post the shout of welcome goes.
Far-off the shouldered spear-heads dance and burn
Through smother of wheels and marching men that
strows

Their wake with dust and song, until at last
They crowd round dun and liss, their journey past.

And all that day go question and reply,
Twin bodkins looping up the stuff of life:
And all that dusk, warm cheek and glancing eye
Blow up love's ruddy peat in man and wife:
And all that night, harps throb and war-pipes cry
Around the king, enthroned in joy complete,
Etain beside him, Ailill at his feet.

But through the songs of praise that round him swell,
One voice to him has music sweeter far.
Close to his heart she now the tale doth tell
Of duty done, and love escaped a scar;—
But not of that deep hour, unspeakable
With visitation from beyond the world,
Shut in her heart, a blossom closely curled.

On Eochaiddh's royal brow sits glad content
That she, fate's minister to Ailill's pain,
Who dared in faith the perilous descent,
Now stands more white against averted stain.

And Ailill, all his heart in service spent,
Fills their glad hours with tender friendship's light
Sweet as the beam that silvers quiet night.

VI

Now at life's wheel Etain the day-long sings;
Not loud, but low as one who musing waits
An hour, whose promise in her deep eye springs
In keen transfiguring light that contemplates
The mystery of small, familiar things
Made great with gleams from hidden beacons lit
And strange with rumours of the infinite.

In that bright realm glimpsed through the shade of this
She sees great peace resolve earth's little strife;
And deepening vision sounds a deeper bliss
Till joy rolls round the fretted shores of life;
And in swift stroke of hate, and love's long kiss,
She marks one law work out one hidden Will,
And life and death one happy doom fulfil.

So pass her days in labour sped with peace.
And now the king, heart-eased in her repose,
Gathers warm love about him like a fleece;
And through the land his joy wide-circling goes,
Stirring swift hands that bid the earth increase
Her gift of good, till gathered riches throng
Their homes with praise, and fill their mouths with song.

Life's labour widely shared the lightlier lies
Along the days; and when its clamours cease,
Free brain and limb are swift in rivalries
Upon the bloodless battlefields of peace
In thought's affray, or deed of strength whose prize
Scarce more adorneth him whose power prevails
Than him who strongly dares and greatly fails.

And in long nights, when age and childhood sleep,
Bright eyes that flicker round the rushlit board
Mark how the chess-players, in silence deep,
Meet skill with skill, until delight is roared
At cunning scheme, or swift unreckoned leap:
But, cute as fox or quick as tern awing,
No hand is found to mate King Eochaидh's king.

Loudly his fame rolls through the echoing land;
But in his dreams, in some high tourney met,
He feels a strong inexorable hand
Counter his craft with calm unwavering threat
By an unseen far-seeing player planned,
That haunts his thoughts with hint of some deep strife
Waged vastly on the board of death and life.

Then from his couch, with apprehensive eye,
Forth goes the king for solace. Mile on mile
His happy realms in dawn's pale radiance lie
Secure in his great strength; so with a smile

He tramples out the night's thin troubling cry,
Then towards his palace turns. Lo! at its door
There stands a chieftain never seen before.

Straightly he stands, nor from his pride's full height
Bends he from neck to knee one purple fold;
Nor dips his blade, nor casts his shield whose light,
Glinting from snowy boss and bead of gold,
Strikes from the king some memory of the night,
So that his quickened eye is swift to trace
A touch of challenge in the other's face.

“ Welcome, O stranger! and doubly were thy name
To me revealed.” “ Midir: to thee unknown.
No far-sung dun is mine, lineage or fame;
Yet in my realm I keep a steadfast throne,
And for my pleasure play a subtle game
With pawn and puissant knight and watching queen.
Fame trumpets far thy skill: now be it seen.”

On swift-spread board and jewelled chess-men break
Slant arrows from the scarcely risen sun.
Rank faces rank. “ Play, king! ” . . . “ Not without
stake
I play; nor bate the forfeit quickly won,—
Thine? ” “ Fifty steeds whose hooves shall Erin
shake.”
Then Eochaidd, lightly at light-seeming task,
“ And mine,” he smiled, “ whatever thou shalt ask! ”

Matchless in skill, King Eochaидh moves elate. . .
One moment . . . then . . . straight lip and slow-
drawn breath
Yield sullenly to sure on-coming fate.
Behind his eyes vast shapes of Life and Death
Move hand to hand. . . . Soon ends the struggle—
“ Mate! ”
The stranger calls . . . King Eochaídha's boast is gone!
“ The stake? ” he vaguely asks. . . . “ Thy wife,
Etain.”

Now like a spider wrapped in his own snare,
The king turned to and fro to rend the spell
Of ghastly loss. Pride stricken to despair
Tugged at life's roof-tree. Round him ruining fell
Puffed hopes and brittle joys that broke in air;
And high desires, reined short in sight of goal,
Stumbled to earth and snapped life's chariot-pole.

Then in that other's eye some glance revealed
Faint pity. . . . “ Nay, not this! ” King Eochaídha cried.
“ Take thou the treasures won on hard-fought field,
Spoils of the furrow, tribute of the tide:
These for thy forfeit here I freely yield;
Not her whose smile makes festive life's poor crust,
But lost would turn its glories into dust! ”

Calmly the stranger answered: “ King, the bird
Poised on a little trick within the brain,

Soars sunward. Kings on honour's lightest word
Unshaken, rear a realm that shall remain.

Snaps a small string: lo! all the song that stirred
With beauty and joy, sinks like storm-swallowed ships,
And bards unborn harp a high-king's eclipse. .

" But fear not thou. Thy fame shall feel no wind
Of cold rebuke; for when these shadows lift,
Thou in life's loss the Spirit's gain shalt find:
Thou to thyself shalt give thine utmost gift;
And know thou only hast what is resigned.
I go—but come on one clear-omened day,
And thou shalt pay thy debt." He went away.

In the same hour the hungry nestling's cheep
Floods Etain's drowsing ear with gentle woe.
Sleep stirred by waking, waking soothed by sleep,
Around her heart in linking eddies flow;
Till at some passing wind that shakes the deep
Of dream, she wakes with eyes that strain to see
A haunting face behind life's mystery.

And in lone hours of many a moonless night,
Through jetting poplars and the jutting snags
Of wrinkled oaks, the king pursues a light
Through his heart's questionings, whose purpose flags
Before her face, lest in her eye's clear sight
One thought of faithlessness a moment caught
Should bring his faith and happiness to nought.

VII

Strong in the strength that finds in gentleness
A way to peace, King Eochaидh on the throne
Of Erin sits. Around his footstool press
High cares of sovereignty, that crowd his own
Like gossips out of doors, and ease the stress
Of storming thought which, held from question clear,
Fears its mute doubt, yet vaguely doubts its fear.

He from Etain's slow step and listening gaze
Senses expectancy behind her smile
Like some faint gleam from half-remembered days
Before the Gods had blown them to this isle
Among inscrutable divided ways,
Some hidden destiny to mar or make
In hands both strong to give and quick to take.

... Now to the king the hollow moments haste
Across his heart to some heart-emptied hour:
And now he frets to leap with sinews braced
Through lagging days and meet the threatening power.
Yet from his conflict inner lips now taste
The mingled wine of sweet and bitter fate—
Strength to withstand, endurance to await.

These not as gifts the shadowy troublers bear,
But on his table spread what is his own.
So mused the king: "Not all from spade and share
The harvest comes: seed to its fruit has grown,
Self-shaped, though stirred by smart of sun and air;
And in life's myriad hands beaten and pressed,
Man is not made, but is made manifest."

So finding gain in threatened loss, his mind,
Self-poised, through sorrow and joy makes even way,
Content if, labour past, his fingers find
Her fingers, and in trembling silence say:
"Here in unstable circumstance entwined
We two have kissed, and whither we may tend,
Once mixed, must find each other at the end."

And she within her heart's most secret place
Nurses a thought that grows from day to day,
Like wind-borne seed that on a rocky face
Finds root and strength to shatter ancient sway,
A thought of Love that chafes at time and space,
And moves from Love that was, through Love to be,
To some exalted end no eye can see.

Yet nought of this was uttered each to each;
But when, like forest monarchs strong and proud,
A silver birch beside a sinewy beech,
They stood at feast to hail the gathering crowd,

Swift winds of joy came full of happy speech,
And through the host light raptures laughed and
 played,
Witless of yellowing leaf or sodden shade.

... Then came a day when on the bare flag-stone
The slow snail crawled; the chestnut's candles turned
Downward as dead; the wolf-hound with a groan
Gazed in King Eochaidh's eyes through eyes that
 burned
Great threat; the spear-grass hither and thither blown
Bent on the sand and traced its rings awry,
And sun and moon slid sideways down the sky.

Swiftly to Eochaidh the dread omens tell
The day of forfeiture; yet to Etain
No word he speaks. Her eyes so softly well
With wondrous beauty, all his heart is drawn
In love to hold her from the coming spell.
Pushed past its hour, the unspoken doom may break,
And love and honour stand without a shake.

On windy gap and boggy mountain path
He sets his watchers. Knee-deep where the fists
Of bracken fronds are clenched in feeble wrath,
Stern guards now stand, and where in sculptured cists
Old kings are harvested in Death's long swathe.
Closed from alarm the shingled roofs now rise
Ringed through the deepening dark with searching eyes.

The word has passed: "The king shall have his whim:
No stranger looks upon the queen to-night."
Around the feasting board men great of limb
Shut fast each door, and blind the hope of sight
With shining shields that turn the torches dim.
Throned firm in strength defying power or guile,
He joys, and hopes—yet fears Etain's faint smile.

... Now harp and song have touched their utmost height,
And fall in sudden silence at a sound
Deeper than sound, and pale before a light
Clearer than light. Above, beneath, around,
All heaven and earth are shaken with a might
Past might: swift chariots clash, and mixed with these,
Are thunderings and the roar of distant seas!

And in their midst is Midir, a shining God
From whose majestic presence swiftly spreads
Peace not of earth. Before his face, unflawed
By shadow of taint, brave warriors bow their heads.
And now the king, snapping his silver rod
Of power, with sudden eyes made clear, with cheeks
Flamed by swift vision, through the silence speaks.

" Now have I seen the shining hand of Him
Who sifts the world for His divine desire;
And gathers, and within His quern's wide rim
Grinds all things meet for His transforming fire,

And kneads them to a purpose far and dim;
Who fashions all things to His growing plan,
And breaks, and moulds, and breaks the heart of man.

“Take Thou Thy will—so it be hers?”. . . A hope
Shoots a faint arrow instantly—no more.
A blinding fire falls from night’s glimmering slope.
Flame-like the twain meet on the rushy floor—
And vanish. King and clansmen blindly grope
Into cool air. Across the sky two swans
Fly slowly towards the day that palely dawns.

*Note : “Etain the Beloved” is founded on an ancient Irish bardic tale.
Pronounce: Etain, Etawn; Eochaidh, Yo’hee; Ailill, Al’yil, Midir, Mid’yir. Dun
(doon), a fortified dwelling-place. Liss, a place for horses and cattle.*

FIVE YEARS

Again the lips of April blow
On golden trumpet daffodils.
Awake! my love, for we must go
And build our altar on the hills,
Where breaks the foamy mist when dawn
Comes white and bosomed as a swan.

Take, sweet, thy hand from off my breast,
And mine shall leave thy fragrant hair.
Open thy lips in happy jest,
And mine shall set a token there.
Then forth! where cloud and leaf and wing
Speed, shine and tremble with the spring.

There we shall find a place of shade
Where round the oak's gigantic foot
The primrose blossoms unafraid,
And scented winds have made a lute
Of leaves to praise established power
And loveliness that lasts an hour.

There we shall raise a hallowed shrine
Where we may sing our marriage hymn,
And taste Love's mystic bread and wine,
Nor envy even the Seraphim
Round God, who bends and smiles and hears
The voice of five melodious years:

Five years with overflowing store
Of Love that mingles mind with mind;
That, giving, gathers more and more,
And, taking, leaves not less behind;
And rolls the clouds from Truth's majestic sun,
And finds the One in all, the All in one.

April 9, 1903-1908.

LOVE'S INFINITY

Since first my heart awoke to winds that blew
Infinite need, lo! it has climbed its stair
Of dreams, and to the unresponsive air
Stretched hungry hands, and called and called
for you.

Then, answerless, it moulded of the dew
And splendid noons and sunset's tumbled hair
And deep sea-music, something more than fair
Which long it strove to know, yet never knew.

But now your cheek is warm against my cheek.
And is love satisfied? Nay! evermore
Your hands are full of promise, and your eyes
Gleam with a spirit-light I still must seek
But never find; for joy has joy in store,
And heaven another heaven within its skies.

THE FIRE OF LOVE, THE WINE OF LOVE, AND THE WINGS

I will walk by the Fall of Torc in the early day,
When the waters jump and clash in a shining spray,
Like the well-filled glasses that toast the new-made
bride;
And the rocks, under quilts of moss, lie side by side,
As a man and a woman, married, together alone.
I will climb the path where the ivy's arms have grown
Around the stem of the oak and the silver fir,
As I would to God my arms were holding her
Who has planted herself, a tree in the gap of my
heart.
I will sit on the roaring edge, where the waters dart
White lips that are mad with love, and meet in a kiss.

That is life and death in the meeting.—But I will not
be thinking of this,

Or the ivy's arms, or the rocks in their quiet bed;
For my eyes, half closed, will have slid from the
mountain's head

To the woody side where the earliest flame of the
sunlight broke

On the soft young larches whose heads go up in a
smoke.

And it's this I will think, that if someone passed that
way

Whose eyes were not burned up with love, he would
stop and say:

“ It was not a man that I saw by the Fall of Torc,
But a smoke like the young larch-tops when the sun-
flames work

Their secret enchantments, a smoke from a terrible
fire of love

That cannot be quenched by the floods from the top
of the heavens above,

Or be smothered up by the flames from the deepest
hell! ”

I will walk by the shore of Loch Lein when the
midday spell

Lies flat on the looking-glass where the purple peak
Stands still on its head, like a clown at a fair; and
the cackle and shriek

Of the blackbird in nesting-time is echoed from elm
and ash.

I will watch where the wild drake rises with quack
and splash

From the reedy places that hide the desire of the
heart.

And it's not alone I will be when the furzes part,
And your hand is in mine. O wine of my life! it is
not of these

I will think; for my eyes will be filled with the sally
trees

In their young sweet grace, when their limbs in the
sunlight shine

As if they were steeped for an age in enchanted wine.
But it's this I will think, that if one should be going
that way

Who was sober, not being in love, he would pass and
say:

“ It was not a man that I saw by the shore of Loch
Lein,

But a sally tree that is dyed with the purple stain
That comes over the minds of men who are drunk
with the wine of love!”

I will row my boat on Muckross Lake when the
grey of the dove

Comes down on the end of the day; and a quiet like
prayer

Grows soft in your eyes, and among your fluttering hair

The red of the sun is mixed with the red of your cheek.

I will row you, O boat of my heart! till our mouths have forgotten to speak

In the silence of love, broken only by trout that spring
And are gone, like a fairy's finger that casts a ring
With the luck of the world for the hand that can hold it fast.

I will rest on my oars, my eyes on your eyes, till our thoughts have passed

From the lake and the sky and the rings of the jumping fish;

Till our ears are filled from the reeds with a sudden swish,

And a sound like the beating of flails in a time of corn.

We shall hold our breath while a wonderful thing is born

From the songs that were chanted by bards in the days gone by;

For a wild white swan will be leaving the lake for the sky

With the curve of her neck stretched out in a silver spear.

Oh! then, when the creak of her wings will have brought her near,

We shall hear again a swish, and a beating of flails,
And a creaking of oars, and a sound like the wind
in sails,

As the mate of her heart will follow her into the air.
O wings of my soul! we shall think of Angus and
Caer,

And Etain and Midir, who were changed into wild
white swans

To fly round the ring of the heavens through the
dusks and the dawns

Unseen by all but true lovers till Judgment Day,
Because they had loved for love only. O love! I will
say,

For a woman and man with eternity ringing them
round,

And the heavens above and below them, a poor
thing it is to be bound

To four low walls that will spill like a pedlar's pack,
And a quilt that will run into holes, and a churn that
will dry and crack.

Oh! better than these is a dream in the night, or our
hearts' mute prayer

That O'Donoghue, the enchanted man, should pass
between water and air

And say: "I will change them each to a wild white
swan,

Like the lovers Angus and Midir, and their loved
ones Caer and Etain,

Because they have loved for love only, and have
searched through the shadows of things
For the Heart of all hearts, through the fire of love,
and the wine of love, and the wings."

Killarney, Easter 1913.

DEATH AND LIFE

To the memory of Eveleen Nicolls

The long dark slope is topped with mist,
But here the sun is on the grass.
Beneath, the sea-waves break, and twist
Backward like snakes of molten glass.

Across an ancient sand-heaped wall
The foot through graves forgotten goes,
And stops where old old voices call
Through generations of repose.

But where a sorrow of today
Has set a freshly fashioned mound,
A bird slides down his airy way
And makes the silence ring with sound.

What gloom might now our spirits balk
Fades out before that high reproof;
And through the fabric of your talk
Go light and shadow, warp and woof,

With something deeper than the word,
Some stately certitude of faith
Whose eye at life had never blurred
Nor quivered at the eye of death,

But saw in that swift woman's way
Through changings to the changeless Whole,
And life and death as waves that sway
Across the ocean of the soul.

Then when the hill was lost in mist,
And in the sea the sky was glassed,
We wandered home in amethyst;
And you upon the morrow passed

On that last journey to the west
Whose end was in the Atlantic wave,
Where, on your youth's triumphant crest,
One stroke, another's life to save,

With glory crowned your life complete,
Proud as the horsed and pluméd seas
That laid your body at my feet,
A wonder past Praxiteles.

Oh! bear her body by the crest
And past the fields of fallen ears
On its last journey from the west
This holy Lady Day of tears.

But yet, though heads are bared and bowed,
And down the road the keeners keen,
Some spirit-music, deep and proud,
Slips out their shrill thin cries between;

And, like the bird that other day,
That made the silence ring with sound,
It floats along the sunset way,
A joy above our sorrow's mound.

What grief might now our spirits balk
Fades out before that high reproof;
And through the hushed and wavering talk
That fills the streets from roof to roof,

A fire from your high altar shines,
And kindles through our dusk of strife
A faith whose inner eye divines
That Death is minister to life,

And all our years a moment's dream
In one vast Mind that grasps the whole,
And life and death but waves that gleam
Along the ocean of the soul.

Ventry, Kerry, August 13-15, 1909.

Note: Eveleen Nicolls was drowned in an effort to save a village girl who was bathing with her in the sound between the Great Blasket Island and the mainland.

THE CROSS AND THE BOOK

To the memory of Annie Pielou

Here we have raised rough-hewn our granite cross,
And set her name upon a marble book
Open forever, where the solemn rook
Sways on the branch that mountain breezes toss.
And when the twilight shadows take the gloss
From day's pale cheek, O you who, pausing, look,
Say: "For the love she gave, great love she took:
Lo! here in dust are wedded gain and loss!"

For us—a tear. For her—Oh! music make!
Death has unclothed from vesture of decay
The shining Self that knows not death or birth!
She is not here! Yet here, for Love's sweet sake,
Stand cross and book to mark the honoured clay
That holds the form she honoured once on Earth!

Deansgrange, Dublin, December 23, 1912.

TREES IN WINTER

Gaunt and spare,
The silly trees
Strip them bare
To winter's breeze;

Yet when July
Sweltered red,
Dressed unduly
Heel to head!

Who will whisper
Unto me
Why is this
Perversity?

Bent his head
A stately beech:
Slowly said
In rustling speech:

“ Why, O man! not
Find a moral
(Though you cannot
In the laurel)

“ In our vigour
And our pelf,—
Type and figure
Of yourself?

“ Sun-kissed amity
Conceals
What calamity
Reveals:

“ Summer glazes
Stain and scar;
Winter shows us
As we are.

“ Well if thou,
In trying hour,
Stand or bow
In naked power,

“ Like the spare
But sinewy trees
Standing bare
To winter’s breeze!”

DAEDALUS AND ICARUS

The builder of the Cretan labyrinth and his son

Quoth Daedalus to Icarus:

“ With rule and plumbline (thus—and thus)
We space and build our labyrinth;
And build, besides, a graven plinth
To bear the future fame of US,”
Quoth Daedalus to Icarus.

Quoth Icarus to Daedalus:

“ Before these Cretans make a fuss,
And set our names up with a shout,
Perhaps we’d better first get out,
And show the master-mind of Us,”
Quoth Icarus to Daedalus.

Then round and round went Daedalus,
And out and in went Icarus.

They parted for an hour’s whole space . . .

They met upon the selfsame place!

“ I think we’re stuck,” quoth Icarus.

“ I think we are,” quoth Daedalus.

In short (to be perspicuous
Like this old tale of Icarus),
Despite our mouths with freedom filled,
From life’s poor trivial things we build
A maze about the feet of us
That shuts us in like Daedalus.

But Daedalus and Icarus
Made wings, and set them thus—and thus;
And that blind maze that hemmed them in
They sloughed as drops the snake its skin;
And so at last shall all of us,
Like Daedalus and Icarus.

HEAVEN AND EARTH

After a South Sea legend

Truth in untruth, wisdom on folly's tongue,
And substance in a shadow! Hear ye this.
Once on a time, amid primeval bliss,
In starry ears a bridal song was sung;
And Heaven and Earth in mutual rapture strung
Ethereal harps, and bartered kiss for kiss,
Till, sated with much joy, Earth grew remiss,
And fell from grace,—but ah! the Earth was young!

O trembling tears of dawn in Nature's eyes!
Forget your sadness. Lo! the happy hour
When penitent love turns loveward thrills the dome.
Earth lifts mute praying hands in tree and flower,
And Heaven in all the windows of the skies
Hangs nightly lamps to light the wanderer home!

SUFFRAGE SONNETS

1. TO THE SUFFRAGETTES

Who sets her shoulder to the Cross of Christ,
Lo! she shall wear sharp scorn upon her brow;
And she whose hand is put to Freedom's plough
May not with sleek Expediency make tryst.
Therefore to you be honour!—unenticed
By shallow tongues that bid you meekly bow

And beg, for what their pleasure may allow,.
With soft obsequious voice and honour priced.
O fateful heralds, charged with Time's decree,
Whose feet with doom have compassed Error's wall;
Whose lips have blown the trump of Destiny
Till ancient thrones are shaking towards their fall;
Shout! for the Lord hath given to you the free
New Age that comes with great new hope to all!

2. TO THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND

“Free as the waves” (they sang) “the waves that
swell

And break in large free laughter round her coasts,
Is England!” sang the dedicated hosts
That for her sake went forth and bravely fell.
But now a word like some heart-breaking knell
Stirs with mute agony their solemn ghosts,
For England—England that of Freedom boasts—
For Freedom’s champions finds—a prison cell!¹

Oh! cease your mocking, England! of the name
Of Her whose face shall never bless your sight
Till man and woman, sharing equal right,
And linked in equal honour, equal shame,
Move, as of old, twin orbs in God’s clear light,
And purge the world with one unwavering flame.

¹ *The Suffragettes.*

3. TO CERTAIN LEGISLATORS

You, from whose lips the words of cold disdain
Have stung with bitterness, but not dismayed,
Those hearts who, for their birthright, would invade
The hollow sanctities of your domain!
Have you forgot what *men* have done to gain
Your freedom? Think of many a fatal blade
Struck home in silence, many a barricade
That stemmed the tide of proud Oppression's reign.

Now Freedom's dawn for Womankind has come;
And if their souls, that long in silence yearned,
Break into flame and shame your feeble spark,
Keep you your scorn: remember, and be dumb:
Not yet man's fullest lesson have they learned—
Pillage and fire, and murder in the dark!

4. TO ONE IN PRISON

Dear! on Love's altar thou hast laid thee down,
Priestess and victim of such sacrifice
As might melt praise from very hearts of ice,
But wins the scoff of sycophant and clown.
Yet in that band, whose glory is the frown
Of sceptred tyranny and stained device,

Thou hast thy place; and thee it shall suffice.
To tread with them the path to high renown.

And I, even I, unworthy though I be;
For these my wounds of utter loneliness,
Tired head and sleepless eyes, some part would claim
In the deep rubric of thy mystery;
So may I, in proud years that rise to bless,
Stand in the shadow of thine honoured name.

Note · The author's wife was imprisoned in Holloway Gaol, London, November 23 to December 23, 1910, for participation in the women's suffrage movement.

5. A HOME-COMING

What flags are these? what trumpets? Oh! what drums?
What pride august? what solemn minstrelsy?
Hush! drums, ecstatic drums! Say, who is she
That in the midst majestically comes?
Is she some queen whose haughty eye benumbs
Proud potentates? whose word can lift the sea
Of shattering war, and fling red misery
Across the world? Speak! drums, O aching drums!

Hush! hush! wild drums! drums in my happy heart!
Not thus she comes, my life's exalted queen,

But in deep silence far outlauding praise.
Hers is no flaming sword that puts apart,
But Right's relentless blade whose stroke unseen . . .
Wounds but to heal and crown with Freedom's bays!

December 24, 1910.

On the return of Margaret E. Cousins to Ireland from Holloway prison.

“I SET MY LOVE UPON A THRONE . . .”

I set my love upon a throne whose height
Out-topped the world; and fitly to adorn
Her brow, old Balor, from his ancient horn,
Poured forth the glittering jewels of the night.
Then, wrapped in solemn joy from sound and sight,
We ruled the deathless realm where dreams are born,
Till Lugh, across the golden shield of morn,
Smote us from slumber with his spear of light.

Yet not for glories that have come and gone
We climbed, beloved, and evermore shall climb.
What is, must pass: and what is not shall stay.
Our search is for the timeless heart of time.
Our eyes are on a day that shall not dawn.
Our dreams are in a night that knows no day.

Balor is the Irish God of Night.

Lugh is the Irish God of Day

THE FAIRY RING

Enfolded in the Fairy Ring
My loved one sleeping lies;
To simple souls a dreadful thing,
For half a hundred eyes
Peer out from where among the grass
Floats up a magic lay
To call the souls of all who pass,
To Fairyland away.

But I who know her heart's desire,
Fear neither spell nor frown;
For not till fire shall stifle fire,
Or water water drown,
Or love hate love, can any harm
In kindred hearts abide.
Oh! she can combat charm with charm,
My elfin-hearted bride!

And you whose minds are set to win
Fame's leaf or fortune's prize,
Beware the spell that lurks within
The circle of her eyes;
For she has power to blow like straws
Earth's baubles from the hand,
And call the souls of all who pause,
Away to Fairyland.

LOVE IN ABSENCE

Hills crowned with age, and solemn seas,
Are full of sage philosophies.
But, lacking thee, I am not wise:
I need thine eyes that I may see.

Insect and bird chant prose and verse,
God's passion-stirred interpreters.
Howe'er I seek, their meaning slips:
I need thy lips that they may speak.

LOVE, THE DESTROYER

Come from behind those eyes that I may see
Thyself, beloved! not lip or hand or brain.
These are not thou! These are the servile train
That crowd me from thine inmost mystery.
Show me thy naked soul!—or it may be
That, lacking this, I shall, in love's mad strain,
Shatter the form, and sift it grain by grain
To find thine utter self, thee, very thee! . . .

Ah! love, forgive! Be this my penitence
That in my passion I have glimpsed the goal
Of all calamity, and surely scanned
In flood and flame, earthquake and pestilence,
Love raging forth to find Love's inmost soul,
With bridal gifts in ruin's awful hand!

THE COMING OF NIAV

Softly as comes a wind across the sea
And thrills the waves to music on the beach,
And stirs the trees to whisperings each to each,
And bids the birds to scatter songs of glee;
So, in the heart's deep quiet, came to me
Niav the Fair, Niav the Wise. Her speech
Exhaled a lineage longer than the reach
Of memory, older than all thrones that be.

And through dark tumults that around me rise
She hints of hidden and tremendous things,
Grails yet unwon and quests that never cease;
And calls me on to where with quenchless eyes
She with the deathless dwells, and folds her wings
Enthroned in vast unutterable peace.

Niav (Irish, Niamh) is the consort of Lir, the sea-god, and a figure of the soul. See "The Marriage of Lir and Niav," page 36.

WILL

I drew my sword against the sky,
And dared the power of God most high.

A sudden palsy loosed my grip,
And froze defiance on my lip.

My stricken weapon fell to rust.
My lordship bent its knee in dust.

I raised my forehead to the sky,
And craved the grace of God most high.

From unseen Lips there came the word:
“Leave thou the dust! Take thou thy sword!

“The Whole in all its parts fulfils
One Purpose through the warring wills.

“The strength that broke thee is thine own:
Thyself thyself hast overthrown!”

A sword goes forth on land and sea:
Who dares the power of God and me?

AWAKE

Just now I awakened suddenly out of sleep.
I came floating and wavering upwards out of the deep,
Like the jelly-fish that sideways glimmer and sway,
Dim ghosts in the green clear waters of Galway Bay.
As a drift of wrack, this way and that way urged,
I came floating and wavering upwards, till here I
emerged;

Till here I emerged—and the Vision of limitless
Space

Is blurred by this picture that clings about my face;
This lantered gew-gaw darkness that hides the Light;
This blindness that men call sight.

From the music of infinite Silence I am compassed
around

By this toneless, tuneless, restless serpent of sound,
This deafness that men call hearing.

From the Bliss that my soul in the body's trance was
nearing

I am plucked and hustled away

By this crowd of shuffling things that decay.

From the ocean of Peace I am flung in these shallows
of strife,

This death that men call life.

From a sleep I emerge: I am clothed again by this
woven vesture of laws;

But I am not and never again shall be the man that
I was.

At the zenith of life I am born again. I begin.

Know ye, I am awake, outside and within.

I have heard; I have seen; I have known the bite of
this shackle of place and name,

And nothing can be the same.

Henceforth a harshness I am for your purification.

A strong sharp odour I am of resuscitation.

I am the garlic that grows in the woods of Coolavin,

That a sword of invisible light has peeled skin below
skin,
Down to the deathless germ, the innermost I.
Across your quiet sky
I am floated out, a battle-flag.
I have flung away the body's prison-rag.
I have burst that cobweb-haunted chamber, the mind.
I have sent three shouts of freedom along the wind.
I have struck one hand of kinship in the hands of
Gods, and one in the hands of women and men.
I am awake! I shall never sleep again!

VISION

When I from life's unrest had earned the grace
Of utter ease beside a quiet stream;
When all that was, had mingled in a dream
In eyes awakened out of time and place;
Then in the cup of one great moment's space
Was crushed the living wine from things that seem;
I drank the joy of very Beauty's gleam,
And saw God's glory face to shining face.

Almost, my brow was chastened to the ground,
But for an inner Voice that said: "Arise!
Wisdom is wisdom only to the wise;
Thou art thyself the royal thou hast crowned;
In Beauty thine own beauty thou hast found,
And thou hast looked on God with God's own eyes."

DEDICATION

These songs, to you who have not eyes or ears,
Chained, vulture-scarred, on life's bare, rocky tiers,
Promethean souls who hide the stolen fire
Under thick need, black anguish, foiled desire,
I dedicate, that so my heart have ease
From her great debt. Her wine upon its lees
Sweet is against your bitter. She hath her fill
Of Beauty beauteous made beside your ill,
And knoweth her joy in song is yours in fee
Nourished upon your songless misery.

Where were the heights if depth lay not between?
Where light if darkness lowered not her screen?
Down through the void would topple earth and sun
If from your place were pushed the meanest one
Of all your huddling band, O ignorant
Stark souls that in the world's deep shadows pant
For what, you know not! Here a soul draws near
To pay account—in song you will not hear!
Yea though, could you but know, your laugh immense
Would shake to dust my beggar-recompense,
I bring it, proudly prostrate, lay it down
Before your silence, asking not the crown
Of your dull scorn, as scornful poets do.
Nay, humbly here I vow these songs to you,
That I may lay up treasure for myself

In days when you have climbed my windy shelf,
And in accomplished sunshine basking sit,
When I have gone to cleanse me in the Pit
From pride, or avarice, or the curse of thought
That holds good good, ill ill, and sees them not
Twin stars that circle round one hidden pole,
Pathways that alternate to one far goal.

O ye in Abraham's bosom then that dwell!
When I to you shall raise mine eyes from Hell,
Perhaps across the resonant abyss
That day my heart shall thrill with joy of this,
Dim with rebirth, when you shall find and look
Through and beyond the letter of this book,
And for its love a loving thought shall cast
To him who felt, and thought, and sang, and passed,
Holding one truth, though many rise and fall—
Life moves to life, and One Life lives in all,
Moving with feet innumerable that go
To some high end we in the end shall know!

The wave runs down to dark and up to light.
One swimmer swims the hollow, one the height,
Then change their place. The haltless wave drives on
Unto great business past the gates of dawn,
Made meaningful by us who onward breast,
Dark in the hollow, glimmering on the crest.
The Weaver throws His shuttle right and left:

Lo! we are patterned in His warp and weft.
Wherefore, with no vain hope, no vain despair,
We face the slope with neither praise nor prayer,
Content to know, though knowledge yet be dim,
Our place no meaner than the Seraphim.

With hail from hill to valley of friend to friend,
Answered or answerless, whatever the end,
We lift or lay creation's lessening load,
Pass and repass upon the spirit's road!

STRAIGHT AND CROOKED

I passed a crookéd, stunted tree.
It pushed its wizened arms at me.
I muttered as I passed along:
“ I will not put *you* in a song.”

I passed a stunted, crookéd man.
He smudged me with his black tea-can.
I said, as down my brows I drew:
“ I will not make a song on *you*.

“ I'll sing of hills, clouds, flowers and wings;
Of beautiful and mystic things,
Where God and Art are reconciled.”
A something somewhere slyly smiled.

The hills drew down the heavy cloud.
The rain hung round me like a shroud.
Flat lay the wild sweet violet.
No wing would shield me from the wet.

I saw the stunted, crookéd tree.
It stretched inviting arms at me.
I put my back against its bole,
And, shivering, thanked it from my soul.

And when the crookéd, stunted man
Held out to me his black tea-can,
I drank a draught of liquor warm
That would keep out the blackest storm.

What happened then I cannot tell;
But man and tree began to swell
And rise like ocean-sailing spars
Until they touched the windy stars.

I never thought that I should see
So tall and straight a man or tree:
And I began a song to make,—
But laughter seemed the earth to shake!

I tried to catch a flying thought,
But only far and thinly caught
A whisper through the twilight dim:
The straight and crookéd are in him!

Garston, Lancashire

THE MILKY WAY

“ How shall I know again the joy of the Lord? ”
I cried. “ How shall I sing
His songs, that are Eire’s songs, in a strange land
thick with gloom;
Or find through the low dead sky of smoky street on
street
The starry way King Orry walked through shattered
cloudy bars? ”
Suddenly out of the sulphurous air an angel
flashed a wing
That shook across a grimy wall a black-stemmed
elder’s bloom;
And there! on the muddy pavement! lay out for my
halting feet
A Milky Way of the shaken elder’s five-rayed silver
stars!
Oh! now I have found again the joy of the Lord;
I lift my harp; I sing
Of life, of love, of Eire, though Earth roll thick in
gloom;

For my vision has passed the shadows; like a smoke
they roll up; they fleet
As dust at the hooves of the Horses of Beauty that
draw her conquering battle-cars!

Garston, Lancashire

THE SWORD OF THE LORD

Lord! for the pride that boasted: "In holy ire
Wield we the Sword of the Lord," let not Thy brow
Blast us in wrath! Who trieth the nations but Thou;
Thou whose name as of old is Consuming Fire?
For the pigmy reach of the soul's enforced desire,
The virtue dared in face of the threatening Now,
Thou through our dreams hast driven Thy quickening
plough
To stir our inanimate clay to Thy purpose nigher.

"Give peace," we pray, "give peace in our time,
O Lord!"

Oh! first give wisdom, deeper than deed or word,
To learn that not till the inward conflict cease,
And the will of the flesh with Thine move in accord
Past self, that is parent of strife, shall the ancient
Sword

Of Thy Love's purgation be sheathed in a lasting
peace!

1914.

BUBBLE-BLOWERS

Tramping a dusty road as the sun went down,
I passed a boy with a face as the bracken brown,
Perched high, like a rook with wings in battle torn,
On the topmost bar of a gate to a field of corn.
Hugged tight with his knees he held an ancient cup,
Willow-pattern, handleless, cracked, whose place had
been taken up
On his mother's dresser by delph of a later breed.
In his hand he grasped a pipe that his father's
weed
Had stained as brown as his bracken-coloured face,
Till steeped in a rank thick odour it fell from grace
To become the sport of the sun-baked, rook-like boy,
Who sat on a gate, his eyes a-sparkle with joy,
And lifted a pipeful of soap from his cup to his
puckered mouth,
And blew out bubbles that glimmered away to the
south:
Bubbles the size of his head or his eye, and every
size between:
Bubbles that glinted the rainbow tints, but mostly
blue and green:
Bubbles that broke in a greasy splash on his tattered
coat:
Bubbles that spun and lifted, and seemed to float
Away to the end of the world and up the sky.

I smiled as I passed his gate. He caught my eye,
And lowered his bubble-machine from his mouth with
 a sudden trace

Of guilt—that broke like a bubble. He smiled. His face
As brown as the bracken, and lit with a secret joy,
Went with me, and timed my feet to the heart of a boy.

Tramping the road of the heart at the hush of a day
That came with the cricket's whistle and scent of hay;
When the man of the fairy-folk, who lives in my head,
Put dreams in my eyes, and thought's long plough-
 lands spread

To lure my hand to the sickle to reap and bind,
To gather and garner the harvest that filled the mind
With pomp and shouting and tilts from the fiddler's
 nook,

Suddenly into my thought there fluttered a rook
With a tattered coat and a boy's brown bracken-face
That smiled on my gorgeous dreams with a subtle
 trace

Of something that said, *You also!* I woke, and smiled,
For I saw myself, a sun-kissed ancient child,
Perched high on a gate, with bubbles about me
 spread:

(For what is this hollow thing that is called my head
But an old cracked cup, filled full of bubble stuff?
And what is my song—and all songs be they tender
 or tough—

But an old, old pipe where a thousand lips have
blown
Their bubbles and passed?) . . . But I knew we
were not alone,
We singers of songs. Around us on millions of gates
Sat kings in their crowns, and monks with shaven
pates;
Wise men dark with their wisdom, and wiser who
prayed for light;
Women who irked at quiet, and soldiers who thirsted
for fight,
Blowing bubbles, bubbles, bubbles. And far past the
glimmering end,
Where the great white roads of Eternity cross and
wend
Through the vast ploughed fields of space, I saw a
gate,
And the husbandmen of the worlds pass in and out,
or await
The sign of the Master-Blower of Bubbles, who sat
and blew
Stars and suns and systems that glimmered and flew
In bubbles that glinted the rainbow tints. I smiled
With the wide abashless eyes of an ancient child.
Then the Master-Blower of Bubbles slowly turned
And smiled at me over the vastness, until I burned
With the joy of knowledge that, whether the bubbles
break

In a splash on His breast, or their orbits in heaven take,
It matters no whit if the bubbles rise or fall,
For the bubble itself is nothing, but the blowing of
bubbles is all!

A HYMN TO HIDDEN LOVELINESS

Whose is that voice whose far sweet sound
Within the soul moves strangely near,
Calling and calling, yet is drowned
In silence when I turn an ear?

Whose is that face whose instant sight
Pales the moist evening's crimson sky
With something clearer than the light,
And yet eludes the swiftest eye?

Whose is that hand whose white cool fire
Shakes the rapt body overmuch
With pangs of infinite desire,
Yet slips beyond the keenest touch?

Spirit of hidden Loveliness!
Thine is the voice, the face, the hand;
Thine is the all-compelling stress,
And thine the swift shape-changing wand.

Yet, though of thee I have not sight,
My heart before the rose cries: "Thus
She too, and more!" Yea, seen aright,
Ill things of her are rumorous.

For she, beyond the nights and days,
Has set the spinning orbs astir;
And life, by straight or crookéd ways,
Is slowly rounded home to her.

So, none the more my hands would close
Adoring downwards, calm and clear,
Than when along the whirlwind goes
The dream and work of many a year;

Nor less give thanks where poppy's blaze
Destruction bears through corn and fence,
Than where her garden sister sways
In orient grandiloquence.

Let love to love avowal make,—
With thee alone each heart keeps tryst.
Thy lips moved when the Buddha spake;
Thy gleam was on the face of Christ;

And in my vibrant flesh and brain,
Where dark and light are subtly blent,
Thy fingers leave a rosy stain
Of joy in utter discontent.

For, past the hunger of the heart,
Made mute by throbbing lips or limbs,
Insatiably thou mov'st apart.—
I follow where the flaming dims

From off the hearth of life; and where
The strident glories of the storm
Are folded in unruffled air.—
I seek thine essence past the form;

And dare not, though the pulses ache,
Drop flight to kiss the fleetest wing,
Nor for a heart-beat more forsake
The Lovely for the loveliest thing;

But cry: “O thou whose quenchless gaze
Shall burn the dross from earth and sky!
Take me and fill me, that thy blaze
Destroy me not, but purify!”

IN PRAISE OF COUNTRY LIFE

Oh! at last farewell,
City and smoke and crowd.
Here with the spacious sky and cloud
Heart and soul may swell.
Here are lake, lake and river,
Mountain and forest and fell.

Oh! the odorous bloom
By spendthrift Nature spread:
Lilac and chestnut overhead;
Under, in spangled gloom,
Bracken and heath, heath and bracken,
Poppy and bluebell and broom.

Oh! the jewelled rush
Of life into music mad—
Glad as my heart with summer is glad—
From furrow and sedge and bush;
Robin and wren, wren and robin,
Blackbird and linnet and thrush.

Oh! the word and the smile
Where labour and life are one,
Cleansed by the wind and warmed by the sun,
Simple and free from guile;
Harrow and plough, plough and harrow,
Scythe and timber pile.

Oh! that this day might cease
Not while the days endure:
Here might we, far from the world's loud lure,
Win, for the soul's increase,
Laughter and life, life and laughter,
Worship and work and peace.

Windermere.

THE MAGICAL RING

“ Gather in, gather in for a ring ”
The village children sing.
“ Gather in for a ring, gather in ”
I echo among the whin,
Where the quiet cattle crop
The grass, raise heads, then stop
To survey my lazy position
With a gentle inquisition,
Advance . . . and pause . . . and stand
Around me on every hand,
Great gargoyle against the skies,
A ring of contemplative eyes.

Gather in, brute friends! gather in
From the world and its murky din
To the rim of my furze-fringed hollow,
Where the cheep of the darting swallow
Is mixed with the murmur of flies:
And your ring of contemplative eyes
Know nought of life and its cares,
Save such as are moving the hares
That stretch their ears in the shades
Like fairy windmills’ blades.

Gather in, gather in for a ring!
Your long tails slowly swing

Like censers at invocation.
Gather in for an incantation
To the spirits of earth and air
That crowd on us everywhere,
Called here from the clay and the skies
By your circle of magical eyes!

The vision gathers and flows.
The gulf that parted us goes.
Your ring of evocative eyes
Are as wells where the waters arise
That moved in the Great Abyss
Ere *That* had devolved to *this*;
Soaked down, then, darkened and flawed,
Climbed slowly up to the sod.
There, faint in your eyes' dim deeps,
My image wavers and creeps
Like a shadow without a name
In the depths from whence I came,
My home with the crouching clan
Ere the soul of me rose to man.

Here, stretched in the gorse and grass,
I am clasped by the vision, and pass
From the husks of life to its gist
Through the power of the Alchemist
Who has minted the senses' lead
To a golden fire in the head,

And changed your enchanting eyes
To a Mystery ancient and wise.
For now, in quivering lines,
The sun out of Taurus shines,
Where daylong the heavenly Bull
The Plough of the World shall pull;
And your eyes at the end of the day
Shall mirror the Milky Way,
Where the Cow of the Nourishing Night
Leaves a pathway vast and white.
Thus, high on the starry track
Of the circling zodiac
You are lifted, light as a breath,
Out-topping life and death,
On the Symbol's shakeless tower,
As Power and the Shaper of Power,
The cosmic warp and weft,
God's right hand and His left;
One to struggle and strain,
And one to support and sustain,
So long as Life has place
To flower in the fields of space,
And the sun and the midnight skies
Make a circle of magical eyes,
And the dancing planets sing:
“ Gather in, gather in for a ring! ”

THE DOUBLE STREAM

On the misty hills
where the wild deer dizzily goes
the Genius of Earth distils
from heavenly vapours
the magical draught that flows
in a hundred rills
falling as molten tapers
through shivering firs
leftwise rightwise swung
as the great-browed boulders
mighty-handed shapers
fling from their giant shoulders
lances of silver that splinter
on silver shields and blend
in a whirl of glistening snow
in the heart of summer a winter
and melt in a moss-rimmed pool and go
slowly and slowlier down
to the long broad pebbly bends
at the dingy querulous town
where the river seaward wends
burdened and soiled and dark
in the sombre valley
save where a wandering spark
from the smoke-stained sun
some shadowy memory stirs

like a rhyme that a poet forgot
and links its life in one
with its far exalted lot
on the misty hills
with a hint that through the din
of a murky alley
in the heart of human ills
or high where the seer goes
from Spirit to Spirit flows
one stainless cleansing stream
on the height of the dreamer's dream
in the depth of the sinner's sin.

Bettws-y-coed, Wales.

THE MILL

One thing forever fixed is set—
The love between us two,
Though thoughts revolve, and friends forget,
And old give place to new.

So, as between this stone that stands,
And this that moves so fleet,
Life sifts our harvest through his hands
And grinds it like the wheat.

TALK TO A FIELD-MOUSE

You pass me like a deeper shade
Of twilight where I musing lie
In grass and hedge's mingling jade,
Then stop, and with a beady eye
Scan me, till something in me stirs
To give you look for look, and see
Your secret, under spectral firs,
Linked in our mutual mystery.

Time was when in my childhood's days
It was a fearful thing to lie
In a wild creature's curious gaze,
Dumb strangeness holding eye to eye.
But growing love and wisdom caught
The secret set in Nature's book:
Our thinkings atomize one Thought;
Our eyes are fragments of one Look.
So, past imprisoning hands and feet,
Blent in the Spirit, equal, free,
Deep in one Being we may meet,
And touch a purer ecstasy
Than the loud storm of kindred blood
That strains to mingling, mad and blind,
Or the fantastic echoing flood
In shifting channels of the mind.

Yea, through far strangeness we may rest
In nearness that would miss our ken
Were I a mouse to claim your nest,
Or you a man who preyed on men!

Lo! now across our sundering grooves
There comes a power that shakes us free.
In you some prophet impulse moves,
Some hidden retrospect in me;
And, where our pathways meet and merge,
We pierce the myth of earth and sky,
And mingle on the fluctuant verge
Where lives, in one vast Living, die.

That was a link of midnight snapped!
Now revelation, clearly terse,
Shows us as wild-heart creatures trapped
Within the shuttered universe.
Yet for our solace we may smile,
Since He who our immurement wrought
Pulls on Himself the sky's huge pile,
And fast in His own trap is caught;
And all those brazen-headed stars
Are nails that hold His wrestling Powers;
Nor shall He slip His prison bars
While you and I are held in ours:
For (mystery, of light assured
In times far off we both shall see,)

Himself in us He has immured:
We are not shades of Him, but He!
Yea He, the Lion of the World,
Shares here our hunger and our drought;
With us in life's vast net is curled,
And we must slowly gnaw Him out.
For this the wheels of being turn.
For this the seer and the mole
And you and I with ardours burn
Caught palely from the labouring Soul
That beats upon life's yielding gates,
And shreds the veil by midnight drawn,
And confidently calm awaits
The slow disclosure of the Dawn.

Meanwhile, good friend, we are agreed
That Life has music in her face,
To joy's fulfilment surely keyed,
And we are passing-notes in place.
And as these branches, lifted far,
Spurn not the clay from which they grew,
We love not less the things that are,
But more for what they lead us to.

MY LADY'S PRAISE

" Now I shall sing my lady's praise
In song that will outlive the years,
An inextinguishable blaze
Through shifting lights of smiles and tears."

Ah! vain the hope to rise on wings
Bound close by earth's exhausting thong,
Or out of life's frail transient things
To build imperishable song.

Therefore I shall not praise her hand
That years will mingle with the dust,
But sing its power to wield a wand
That conjures an eternal trust.

I shall not praise my lady's eyes
That passing time will darken quite,
But sing their mystic depths where lies
The Spirit's everlasting light.

I shall not praise her, part or whole
That knows mutation's withering breath,
But praise the brave and shining soul
That fears not either life or death.

So shall my lady's praise belong
To time beyond time's ruining stress;
And ageless so shall live my song
That sings her everlastingness.

AFTER-GRASS

Bright hopes that April set a-wing
Now fold in August's rich content,
And leave the zest and toil of spring
For quiet of accomplishment.
Life's wave seems spent... A leaf drops
dead:
Yet here, where hints of autumn pass,
The Mother's living hand has spread
The fresh new green of after-grass!

Come forth, beloved! and share with me
The Mother's miracle of cheer.
Our perished budding-time let be.
Lo! life can blossom all the year.
A smile can start eternal spring
Although our summer fade and pass;
And Love to loving hearts can bring
The greenness of the after-grass!

LOVE IN THE HIGHEST

The kiss made sweet by love confessed
Was sweeter made by parting's fear.
Our words were quick and warm with zest
Because of silence threatening near.

All that the heart of pleasure knew
Held ache of what might never be;
And lyric hours in laughter flew
Across dumb gulfs of mystery.

But now our hearts no distance rends.
We take as equal rose and thorn;
And know where each high moment ends
Love's deeper life is only born.

Our happy hearts now find each bliss
But Love's light-pitched and moving kraal;
And know clasped hands and clinging kiss
Not Love, but Love's pale ritual.

So have we found and kept the sweet
Of laughter in the face of time,
And found the quenchless fires that beat
Beneath slow age's gathering rime.

Dear! we have stilled the heart's wild strife
In ecstasy of Love's repose.
The rose has faded out of life—
For life itself is now the Rose!

THE SHADOWY COMRADE.

When comes that hour in which my heart shall gaze
(Even as Dante on his Beatrice
Pale past recall of love's most fervent kiss)
On her who, living, filled my hungry days
With life and music, hope and a measure of praise;
Grant me, O Love! thine eye, averring: "This
Is shard of the budded beech, the chrysalis
Cast where no more the new-winged spirit stays."

So when the dear familiar thing decays,
I shall not grope in the clay for what I miss,
And at her hem of pearl and chrysoprase
Pluck her with sighs back to this realm of Dis;
But in sweet hope shall haunt her heavenly ways,
A shadowy comrade on her path to bliss.

FOR GRETNA ARRANGING FLOWERS

A vase from Noron in Normandy—
Oh! good red clay from the appled south!
And poppies plucked from a garden in Speke—
Oh! burning lips of the summer's mouth!
White fingers that beauty to beauty join—
Up, flutes and trumpets in marriage glee!
And dust as the first and last of all—
O life! . . . O death! . . . O mystery!

Say, then, is joy but a painted mask?—
O lie, sweet lie of the mocking spring!
Is nothing sure to the hungry hand?—
O Something that ever is on the wing!
Were Beauty beauty without our eyes?—
O star that out of the darkness fell!
Would Death be death if it shared not life?—
Ah! lips that know, and may some day tell!

A PAIR OF SABOTS

Head on your foot,¹ I lay in moss,
And traced with musing eye
Your long light arms that seemed to toss
Pure joy against the sky.

But that lithe stem that swayed in air
The shining axe brought low,
And gave my feet a sounding pair
Of Normandy sabots.

Strange doom is ours, O friend! We spread
Proud branch and grasping root;
And you that soared above my head
Are now beneath my foot;

A beech-tree at Balleroy, Normandy.

While I, with fettered urge to flight,
Strain up through grave and gay
To reach as high above your height
As you sprang from the clay;

And learn, as Time with axe in air,
Each branching year brings low,
To shape and wear it—like my pair
Of Normandy sabots.

FROCKEN-GATHERING

Sing a song of girl and boy
In the woods of Balleroy!
He—a score of him—burnt brown,
She—the same—in thorn-ripped gown,
Tried companion of his breeches
Clawed by briars, through the beeches
Dart and shout; on hands and knees
Swim the dark-green swaying seas,
Where in waves the frocken spreads
Dark-blue bubbles on their heads;
And the swimmers lift and dip,
Purple foam on hand and lip,
Purple prowls on purple tide,
Purple cargo stowed inside;

Hailing each from sea to sea
In language meaningless to me,
Here in leafy Normandy.

Ah! not meaningless; for this,
No more dumb than is a kiss,
Speaks the primal meaning stirred
Past the gripping, clanking word
Man has put on heart and brain.
Out upon the noisy chain!
Bid the loud confusion go.
Here, in Nature's face, we know
Were life simple, sweet and young,
Brain and heart should find a tongue
Native, as a smile or dance,
Round the poles, or here in France,
Where the shout of girl and boy
Speaks the word of human joy
Heard of all, ere foolish eyes
Set themselves to scale the skies
Babel-wards, and from the ground
Built them past the clear, profound
Beatings of the ageless mirth
In the simple heart of Earth.

ABELARD TO HELOISE

Notre Dame, Paris, Twelfth Century

A fool sang past the cloister wall:
“Ask all of love, for love knows all.”
And lo! my questions of the Soul,—
The how and whence? the source and goal?
And why this bubble blown of space?—
Are asked and answered in your face!
Love puts this wise man’s heart to school
To learn the wisdom of the fool!

“Ask not the skies; delve not the land;
Love’s answer lies within your hand,”
The fool sang on. Oh! very sweet
The shuffle of the brethren’s feet
Along the floors: a woman’s dress
Was in the sound; the *no* and *yes*
Of all desire; and in the swerve
Of the swung bell a bosom’s curve;
And ruin in your dream-found eyes
For the proud folly of the wise!

Notre Dame, 1912.

IN MEMORY OF
FRANCIS SHEEHY-SKEFFINGTON

When with dark wrongs we waged our strife,
I found you pure past praise or frown;
But in the blinding light of life
Saw not your hovering martyr-crown;
Nor dreamed that when in April showers
New life's green banners were unfurled,
You in the clash of iron powers
Should fall, and, falling, shake the world.

O friend! forgive these eyes that far
Held me from measure of your height,
Nor saw that in your war with war
You of your end had inward sight,
And heard round your vicarious head
God's thunders to the nations call:
“Life is not nourished on the dead:
Who take the sword by sword shall fall!”

Oh! honour fawns about your feet;
For you, with but a breath to live,
Let not death's bitter mar life's sweet,
But stood as One who said: “Forgive,
Father; they know not what they do!”
Ere the reluctant rifles cried
(Nay, to new life saluted!) you
On their blind error smiled, and died.

Yea, and upon our shattering grief
You smile in knowledge deeper grown,

Saying: " You count my life a leaf . . .
By some dark wind through darkness blown:
It is not so!" And there you leave
The fact; and to new labours go,
A soul one-purposeful—to weave
Love's garments for the stark world's woe.

Surely in that exalted place
Where lauding seraphs round you press,
Some wistfulness will cross your face
Shadowed from our heart-loneliness:
Yea, you some hollowness will find
In their flame-blinded praise of Him;
Our strife in darkness call to mind,
And slip between the cherubim,
Crying: " I want no starry crown!
I want no harp save one that thrills
Marching the hosts of Reason down
To war with Wrong between the hills! "

And somehow (though we know not how,
Or may not know the well-known face)
Someone will glimpse your placid brow,
And feel you strongly in your place;
You whom no threat or danger awed;
Whose hand would heal where sharp it fell,
Smite Error on the Throne of God,
And smile on Truth though found in Hell.

Francis Sheehy-Skeffington was the first sacrificial victim in the Irish struggle at Easter, 1916. He was shot without trial though he was trying to restrain the populace from disorder when arrested.

CASTLES IN SPAIN

Those are the very hills of Spain
That lift their spears in morning light
Full-bladed to the charging main,
Like old Cervantes' gallant knight.

Could we but pierce the golden mist,
Now might we scan some castle wall
Made sweet by waking maid, sun-kissed
On lips most pure, most musical.

Yet, had we Druid power to leap
The waves, or travel Israel's way,
Would we from fancy's dream-lit sleep
Call you into our glaring day;

And bid your storied galleons sail
As phantoms down a long dead wind,
Laughed by our lithe lean ships of mail
Out of the harbour of the mind?

Nay! not one oar's-length nearer come,
Lest, for the dream that round you clings,
We take the hard insistent drum
And shameless pipe of present things.

Set on imagination's verge
That holds and shapes the wandering will,
Where sense and vision subtly merge,
Your mystery be mystery still;

And still your fabled sunken gold
Let gleam through deeps of heart and brain,
And we our magic castles hold
Dream-built in an unsullied Spain.

Off the Spanish coast, October, 1915.

A PASSER-BY

Out of some old old volume, legend-eyed
He comes, with lonely deserts in his stride,
Head up, as one whom some far vision charms.
The setting sun plays searchlights through his arms.
Locusts, that Pharaoh knew as hungry things,
Flicker and shine on myriad mica wings
About him; and the sunlit desert dust
Spirts from his heels in glittering jets. I must,
Yes, from this deck, across that muddy span
Of water, speak to that lost ancient man!

“Sir! if our speech hath meaning for thine ears,
And we and thou be each what each appears;
Turn unto us thy dusky face, and tell
What dream of what Rebecca by what well
Glimmers below thy turban. Or perchance

Not yet hath Miriam danced her triumph-dance
For Egypt drowned. At daybreak may we spy
Chariots of Pharaoh's captains floating by?
Or has thy long white garment somewhere hid
A chisel for the growing pyramid?"

No answer! "Say! what art thou? What are we?—
Things yet unborn?—shadows thou canst not see?
Or have we through some magic gateway sailed
Into a spectral world?" In vain I hailed;
For that lost ancient ghost, or man, or priest,
Aureoled with the mystery of the East,
Through the gilt closing covers of the night
Into some old old book slipped out of sight!

Suez Canal, October, 1915.

IN TIME OF WAR

I will raise my voice in thanksgiving, I will utter my
heart in praise
That mine eyes have seen the salvation of God as
the seers of ancient days;
That mine ears have heard, as they heard through
the thunder of men who warred,
The trumpet of Michael that rallies the unseen hosts
of the Lord.

For long had the Lord in Heaven bent eyes on
Adam's seed
In search of the hoped-for ending of hate and lust
and greed;
And now, in Love's red anger, He has filled their
mouths for meat
With bitter herbs of healing: but the end thereof shall
be sweet.
Oh! not in the word soft-spoken, or the tears of
friend and friend
For the blood-red grief of battle, shall battle and grief
have end.
Nay, deeper than these and deeper must the spring
of these be sought:
The work men's hands have fashioned they fashioned
first in thought.
Within is without, tomorrow. Slay inly, and
thou art slain.
They have crowned their feasts with slaughter, their
joy with creature-pain;
They have scorned the Master's warning, as with
blood they defiled His board:
“Lo! they who the sword do handle shall feel the
sting of the sword.”
Who boasts of quarrels cancelled in the face
of a ravening foe?
The beasts of the burning forest, do they not
even so?

Ah! ne'er shall your housetops tremble with the shout
of wisdom near
Till you work for the heart's high pleasure the things
you have wrought in fear;
Till never a man wax lusty on man his brother's need,
Or a woman's neck bend under the heel of woman's
seed;
Till Earth be Man's in its fullness, free, boundless,
sea and sod,
And the voice of Rulers and People be one with the
Voice of God.

1915.

A HYMN TO THE SONG-GODDESS

Mother of Song and Singers! Mother of me
No less than of those made free
Of all thy realm of sea and earth and air,
Wherein, with feet in life set strongly fair,
With hands by noon or midnight splendours filled,
They for thine image here a godlike dwelling build.
Mother of Singers! Mother of me no less,
Although these hands
Lift no sharp trumpet blown for warlike bands
To rise, to march, to press
Through flame and smoke
Beleaguered walls, or in the wilderness

Conjure from sterile sands
The loud and populous lands
Begotten of the deep.
Mother of Song! thee I too shall invoke:
For though its chords know not the conqueror's sweep,
Yet may my unadventuring harp,
Set on a grassy scarp
Midway between the sea that question thrills
And the high-answering hills,
Echo thy subtler music in a tone
Not all unknown
To some whose eyes have vision of the road
To thine occult abode.

Hellas knew thee by a name
Fourfold, sisterly, removed.
We who glimpse the secret flame
Guarded in thy circling hands,
Know thee nearer, deeply proved
One in sunned or shaded lands:—
Eastwards, where the heavens glow,
Lotus-throned Saraswati;
Westwards—islanded in spray
Where a swift melodious hour
Has deeper lure than wealth or power.—
Brigit, Mother-mystery
Wrapped in Light that darkens day:
Three in name, but one the Word
Greece, India, Ireland heard.

O thou Bright Arrow from the unseen Bow!
Mystic daughter of the Light,
Bride of all-containing Night,
And of thy spouse the foe!

Thy barb is fixed in thy true lover's breast.
Thou woo'st him from the depths; yet on the crest
Thou slippest into silence lest, in thee
Losing himself, thou lose a needed note
Out of the multitudinous throat
Of thy celestial harmony;
Or, while his lips thy salutation win,
He lose thy soul within.

Mother of Song and Singers! in hours replete
With joy, have we not cried with emptiness
Of the filled void, and longed and longed to press
Behind the flying music of thy feet
Through the heart's purple twilight and the gleam
Along the lantered chambers of the brain,
Into the crystal centre of thy strain?
Yet for our solace we have caught, in stream,
In thunder and bird-note and the murmur of trees,
In bat's jarred string and bugles of the bees,
Thy passing music: for thou art not alone
In love's loved voice the best-loved tone;
The lure from life, to Life more bountiful;
The harmony to lull
The clash of inharmonious time,
Unto which end man's ages slowly climb:

But thou art also vocal in the spheres,
Moving to song too subtle for our ears.
Oh! there are chantings in the winds that pass,
And poets hiding in each blade of grass;
For thou, God's eldest Voice that built the whole,
Singest the choric world back to no less a goal . . .

The black-browed storm strides loudly from the south,
And flings himself full-length upon the pines
That he may shake from them a windy song
Giving him back his likeness. They from him
Learn a vast note against their singing-time;
And in his wake the happy flooded pools
Bubble faint wordings; while the bleating frogs
Chorus themselves to music past their range
In thirsty twilights, pushing out their joy
Songwards. And these are thou, for thou hast set
Thine urgency in Earth's dim-uttering heart.
Thou spreadest thine insignia on the wave
Harp-strung with foam of tempest. Unto thee
Life strains through life; and in the soundless tomb,
Yea, in death's mould, thou hast epiphany
In the mute marriage-hymn of dust to dust!

Forgive me, Mother! the dear sin of praise,
Since thou thyself art Praise, and hast no need
For our poor quavering reed.
Yet will I raise
A hymn of thankfulness that through my days

Thou didst, with song's bright sting,
Prick into agony my callow brain
With hungry questioning
And sweet creative pain.

What if it was not mine to lift star-clear
Thy face, ineffably unflawed,
Before a bending world, and hear
My harp-notes' echoed laud;
Or conjure down
Heaven's waters to the stain
Of our deep-sullied earth;

Yet unto me was given the gradual crown,
The slow unfolded gain,
Of mine own heart,
Bringing song's greenth, refreshing after dearth.
Mother of me! in quiet paths apart—
Blazed through the midmost of the strife
For my land's freedom, and for full, free life
For mother, sister, wife—

Thou led'st my feet past failing fire and fire,
And pale blown ashes that to sense belong,
Searching the shadows for a flying trace
Of thee, till came at last thy certain grace—
Song lit with life, and life made sweet with song.

And when the sun falls from life's haughty noon,
And underfoot a shadow slowly spreads
Eastwards, grey prophet of approaching night,
Grant me, O Mother! no pale humbleness

Of lessening heat, no mild apology
For song in face of clamour that would claim
Itself all sound, deaf to thy still small voice
That shall consume all tumult. Grant me this:
To hold the spirit greater than the word;
Yet of the word to mould a worthy lip
For thy pure ministration through the earth.
Mother of Singers! O most purely pure!
How should we dare to name thy sacred name,
We, dead of heart, crude-blooded, muddy-tongued,
But that, in exaltation, we have learned
Thine eye is less on deed than on desire!
Wherefore, O Mother! in the dusking time
I would outsing my morning; would eschew,
For what of praise Time's hand to me accords,
The chested strut of consequential rook
Loudly irrelevant. Yet, be it oblivion,
I shall have joy in memory of hours
Great in desire. Then wherefore should I make
The shrill complaint of seabirds in the dark?
Nay, but as shadows deepen I would play
The spring's incorrigible optimist,
The hearty thrush that from a topmost twig
Whistles the sun to sleep, and his last note
Holds through a dream under a nested wing,
Eyes eastward that the first faint hint of dawn
Fail not of salutation. Even so I
Would play at seesaw with the ardent sun

Across the fulcrum of a flame-topped hill;
Rise as he falls, and, as he sinks from sight,
Catch glimpse of chaster glories hung aloft
Among the spreading leafage of the dark
Day-hidden, till at last I lift my head
Full in the bright companionship of stars,
Washed clear of stain in midnight's holy flood
For life's new hazard here or elsewhere.

From song we come. Through song to song we go.
Mother of Song and Singers! thou dost house
All those who wear with joy upon their brows
Keen thorns of aspiration. Through their glow
Thou turn'st thy light to cleansing fire. The woe
Of Beauty, that would clasp the world for spouse,
They have, for urge thy lovers to arouse
To build more fair thy House of Life below.
More than accomplishment is on thy scrolls:
In thee desire and its fulfilment meet;
Yea, and for song the heart has mutely willed
Thou hast a place, with those majestic souls
Who lay their utmost tribute at thy feet—
Silence magnificent with song fulfilled.

1916.

*Of the nine Muses of classical Greece, four were Goddesses of poetry
—Calliope, Erato, Enterpe, and Polyhymnia.*

*Saraswati is the Hindu Goddess of song. Bright was the Irish-Celtic Goddess
of literature.*

IN PRAISE OF EARTH

“Tamas of tamas, Sat of sat,
Dead clay and life-diffusing sun,
Intimate this, remotest that,
Behind their myriad shapes are one.”

So reads my book. And all around,
Glad nature quickens after rain.
The earth-brown peasant on his ground,
Turning brown earth for future grain,
Strides with his striding oxen twain.
Over the deep-dug silent pool
The weaver-bird has hung her nest
That swings in safety as a cool
Soft wind comes chanting from the west
Lifting the morning’s filmy veil;
And where my leafy shade is spread,
Koel to koel overhead
Blows his loud flute’s ascending scale.

So keenly Earth’s clear challenge comes,
Led by the wind’s heart-thrilling drums,
With straight full eye, and steady hand
Bearing for sword the mage’s wand,
That all the proud and powerful past
Fades to a shadow shadow-cast,
And sets its ear against a tree

To catch Earth's simple mystery
Which none may utter mind to mind,
But all who seek shall surely find.

Oh! in such hours, from life apart
Yet closer to its inmost heart,
How freshly comes upon our dearth,
How calmly on our gusty moods,
The authenticity of Earth,
The deep sincerity of woods,
The strong pure passion of the sea;
The fluttering glad futility
Of moths that flicker in the air,
To "Whither?" answer "Anywhere!
What matter? Between dawn and night
All's home where there is wind and sun,
And time for frolic, space for flight,
And what-may-be when flight is done!"

How shrewdly comes from hedge and tree
Rebuke from many a sounded fife
To those who, looking, never see,
And, too much living, miss great Life;
Who, snatching wealth's bedraggled hem,
The spirit's bounty have not seen
When evening proffered unto them
The moon-pearl on a pearly hand
Of cloud outheld through turquoise green

Above a sapphire-paven land;
Who miss, in all the noise and glare
On passing pleasure vainly spent,
The ecstasy of those who share
Maid Beauty's chaste abandonment.

Too long to Earth we dole the wage
Of proudly shallow patronage.

No need hath she for wreaths of song
That boast them her interpreters.

Nay, far more fitly is it hers
To lay her prophet-length along
Our deadness, and to meaning raise
The corpse of crowded empty days,
And set against our shrill unease
Her ancient quiet certainties.

“Put by,” she counsels, “would you live,
Shed garments of the buried years.

New day must day’s new garment give;
Nor, for your retrospective tears,

Can you win comfort from the old
If you would sight the Age of Gold.

Know that alone you proudly cast
The gage of war for this: to hold
Out of your tuneless iron age
Some relic of the mouldered past,
Some squalid sacred privilege.

Oh! wiselier far my vagrants go

Who daily take with youthful laugh
The immortal pilgrim's bowl and staff,
And, reading well my secret, know
That Joy takes never Peace to wife
While death usurps the place of life.
From grasping thought my pilgrims part,
And, down love's pathways pure and plain,
They reach, beyond the sundering brain,
The instant nuptials of the heart."

Lo, unto eyes whose gaze is true
She momently makes all things new;
Changeless through change doth lightly pass.
Behold! the dry bent blade of grass
Whose shade and substance make a square,
Now rounds its shadow to ellipse;
And through a myriad thrilling tips
Her reach is onward everywhere,
Timing to dance of sun and sod
The young adventuring of God.
Yea, and though all, when all is done,
Behind their myriad shapes be one,
No truer wisdom through our days
Will straighten out our devious ways
To where, beyond the shadowy Fates,
We shall have speech with One who waits,
Than this—to thank that Power whose grace
Put eyes within our forward face,

Pathfinding for the runner Soul
Not back to start, but on to goal.

They who this wisdom find, have might
To climb the tree of life and reach
Cool sanctuaries of restraint,
Where poise is window unto sight,
And silence winnower of speech;
Where love has lost the tiger-taint
In vision of the bridal mirth
That blends divinity with earth,
Bone of true bone, true flesh of flesh.
Inly they know what purpose broods
When midnight drags her starry mesh
Along the deep infinitudes;
What pride gives dignity to dust;
From trampled grape comes what sweet must;
What love moves the confederate Powers
Wherewith Fate wields her lightest wand,
Or in dark salutary hours
Turns down a catastrophic hand.

Softly they sleep whose heads have found
The solid comfort of the sod;
Who know, outstretched on holy ground,
That nearest Earth is nearest God.

Madanapalle, South India.

THE HIGHER STOICISM

How shall I sing of others' woe,
I who mine own have left unsung?
Through sorrowing strings ungainly go
My hands, and hold in leash my tongue.
I with such joy have lived so long
It stills the harp of mournful song.

Yet think not grief has passed me by.
I too have tasted life's unease;
Have known death's blank and pain's deep cry;
But, deeper than the depth of these,
Some glance of vision still has caught
Love's purpose through disaster wrought.

Not faith alone has edged the glance
That looks beyond life's growing pile,
And in destroying Shiva's dance
Has glimpsed preserving Vishnu's smile.¹
Powers men deny or darkly pray
Have touched me in the full of day.

And though the *Why* and *Whence* be dark,
And questions *Whitherward* avail
No jot, I feel behind my barque
A homing wind that swells its sail.

¹ When the world needs castigation, Vishnu puts on His mask as Shiva to shake it for its regeneration, says an Indian scripture.

What fellow-voyagers crowd the air
I know—and cast away despair.

I cannot hold it grievous doom
That source and end are out of sight;
Rather, give thanks that these have room
To pull us past our ring of night;
Twin-faced, but single purposed both
To rouse the soul from sensual sloth.

Therefore it is not mine to raise
The chant of passing and revolt
With prophets of chill coming days
In which their birds of passion moult.
I give, for glooms in which they live,
The young-eyed Soul's affirmative.

They miss the forest-secret quite
Whose eyes are fixed on branch or bole.
They only read Fate's book aright
Who not in fragments see the whole,
But feel the sap of life's deep root
Flow on to feed sky-hidden fruit.

Thought-free from every burning hour,
They find cool shaded space to fill
The heart's deep urn from wells of power
Whose draught has grace to heal, and thrill
With gentleness their stoic hand
Who stand—because they understand.

FLIGHT

Blue bird on the mango bough!
Teach me how
I may spread my wings like you
In the blue;
For I think I too can fly
If I only try.
Why? you question, *Why?*
I shall tell you why.

Sometimes in the quiet night
Comes a light
In the middle of my head;
Then I spread
Arms to left and right wing-wise,
Slowly, slowly rise
From the ground
Without a sound;
Hang a dizzy foot or so,
Then let go
And sail away
Like a flake of day
Blown across the wondering dark
Till my spark
Lengthens, flickers into tails,
Shakes and fails,

And I waken with a start
At my heart!
And as now in sunset rays
On you I gaze and gaze and gaze,
I begin to think
I feel the round world sink;
Yes! I leave the ground, I rise
Through my dazzled eyes
To become a part of you,
Of the very jumping heart of you,
The fearless outward spring of you,
The spread glad wing of you!
Bird, O bird! that now
Leaves the mango bough,
See me, see me panting at your side
Swimming down the swirling flashing sun-
set tide!

Alas!
In the whispering grass
I am spread
As one dead.
Overhead
You are but a turquoise gleam
Chuckling at my fallen dream.
Yet I seem
In my mind to find the print

Of a hint
Of a deep infolded Power
That shall flower
Not alone to flight
At your cloudy height,
But along a singing way
Through and past the cage of clay;
Yea a Power that yet will spread
Rainbow wings of Godlihead,
When the inner has come out,
Routing Doubt;
Routing Doubt's twin-hearted wraith,
Blindman Faith;
When we leave control
With the Soul
—Wisdom's goal—
And have wrought with will unshaking
All our dreaming into waking!

Madanapalle, South India.

THE BANYAN TREE

Under the banyan thickly lie
Leaves like an autumn newly shed,
While keen against the sapphire sky
The green of spring breaks overhead.

So closely neighbour birth and death
It seems that the pervading sun
Holds in a trance-like pause of breath
Past, present, future blent in one.

Yea, folded here in calm, beside
Our shallow fret of joy and ruth,
Back on itself the living tide
Augustly flows from age to youth.

For age in wrinkles witch-like stands
And leans great wisdom on her crutch,
Yet pushes forth adventuring hands
Earthward for youth to spring at touch.

Had we thy secret, ancient child!
Our hearts might lightlier pay time's toll;
Count years behind, not on us, piled,
Each hour the birth-time of the soul.

So might we thy large saneness share,
Roots proud in clay and fruitage skied;
Not wholly thinned to fire and air,
Nor in earth-darkness wholly tied.

Unto which end our prayer is made
That we, through deeper vision won
Here where the night-like slumbrous shade
Is cast and mixed by noonday sun,

May glimpse where fast the shuttle gleams,
Flying to weave in mystic ways
Something of daylight in our dreams,
Something of dreaming in our days.

Adyar, Madras.

THE COIN

A beggar, through the fields I passed,
Craving some boon to solace grief;
And Nature blew a laugh, and cast
Into my hat—a withered leaf!

Now I the young and gay will join,
And spend my wealth, and sing in glee,
Because of that exhaustless coin
That spendthrift Nature threw to me!

BALANCE

Wail not that the thorny spear
Pricks about this Persian rose.
Rather count it good that here
Beauty out of harshness grows.

Though the feathery tamarind
Acid fruitage hangs in air,
Spiny cactus, leather-skinned,
Gives a sweetly scented pear.

Let the parrots, gorgeous-hued,
Sharply scold across the sky:
Plain-robed warblers of the wood
Sweetness out of shadow cry.

What if sunlight, fostering
Nested frailty shut from sight,
Strikes in gold along the wing
Of the circling slaughterous kite:

Thus—and in the human heart
Where across a swinging gate
Joy and sorrow meet or part—
Nature holds her balance straight:

Wheels us in a roundabout,
Each to others' purpose pressed,
As our sun-screen, shredded out,
Makes a thieving squirrel's nest.

Yet, look deeper; you may know
Something subtly intertwined
In the clash of foe and foe,
Or the link of kind with kind;

Something that untwists the Rope,
And through slits in sound and shape
Finds towards a larger scope
Hidden pathways of escape.

Hold this truth: the maze of things
Is by one deep rapture stirred—
As a poet soothly sings
Meanings past his wisest word.

Madanapalle, South India.

UNITY

High on the rock-paved praying-ground
The sons of Allah stand,
Then in obeisance soul-profound
Bend earthward head and hand.

In robe and turban many-hued
They bloom upon the mind,
A bank of flowers in prayerful mood
Bending before a wind.

And here, beside the white-towered shrine,
God Shiva's ancient seat,
Field-blossoms in the sunlight shine
About my wandering feet;

And, as a breeze across my brow
On some glad errand runs,
They bow, as in devotion bow
Allah's and Shiva's sons.

So calm the encircling hills, so sweet
The jasmine-scented air,
God, man and nature seem to meet,
And cancel *here* and *there*;

And show that, underneath their mask,
One holy impulse stirs
Those flowers that grace from Allah ask,
These clay-born worshippers.

In such clear glimpses of the Whole
Our foolish barriers fall;
For who finds kinship with the soul
Is kindred unto all.

LATE MONSOON

No blade of song parched fingers pluck.
No thought-cloud cools the red-rimmed eye.
Life's quenchless burning sun-lips suck
The heart-fruit cracked and dry!

Down to her core the soul shall rend
In awful thirsting pain
Unless God in His mercy send
The singing rain!

O God! write, write in gathering shade
Thy cloud-account across the sky:
The price be set, the bargain made;
I ask not how or why,

But this: let passionate lightning rend,
Thought's thunder shake the brain,
If these must come before Thou send
Song-giving rain!

THE TAJ MAHAL

1. The Paradox

What love exhaled what beauty! What desire
Broke whitely past the flesh, and in dumb stone
Found silence louder than the heart's wild tone
That for vast sorrow raised this moonlit pyre!
Flame to white flame, minar and slender spire
He bade arise, consuming his deep moan.
Vain! vain! His grief for us to bliss has grown
Through beauty's quenchless and preserving fire.

Canst Thou not leave us to our little ends,
Allah? nor our dear purposes annoy
With something deeper than the eye can see,
As here, where, more than stricken love intends,
Sorrow is throned on everlasting joy,
And death is crowned with immortality.

2. The Forgotten Workers

Ten thousand and ten thousand came and went,
Forgotten builders of one lasting name;
Even as fuel perishes to flame,
Grapes to new wine, their strength for others spent.
Yet here they have enduring monument,
One with the master's whom our lips proclaim;
Beyond the loud irrelevance of fame,
The worker lost, in his great work content.

Ah! smile on us who build Thy House of Life,
Allah! that we, though nameless, have the grace
To perish greatly in Thy rising fane,
Where beauty wields pain's hammer, death's keen
knife.
Grant us oblivion in Thy shining Face!
All else forgotten, Thou alone remain!

3. The Murmurs in the Dome

Sunrise. The servant makes his morning round,
And on the tombs his duster flicks and swings
With a soft swish. A raucous beggar sings.
High in the dome, caught swiftly from the ground,
Murmur and murmur echo and rebound,
Transfiguring those abject common things
To heavenly Presences on rustling wings
Joined in a conclave of celestial sound.

Had we but ears made pure that we might hear,
Allah! beyond this flying dust of speech,
The authentic Voice that our vain words eclipse;
Ah! then, the Infinite low-murmuring near,
We might outsing our beggar-whine, and reach
A godlike utterance on human lips!

4. The Builder's Rest

For her alone, love's queen, this queenly tomb
He planned; and for himself in thought essayed
On Jamuna's thither margin to be laid
In a severer pomp of kingly gloom.
Ah! vainly men to fashion fate presume!
Steadfast through passing empires, here arrayed
In deathless beauty he himself had made,
Dust by her dust, he finds his perfect doom!

Open our eyes, and unto them display,
Allah! the hidden Taj that through our strife
Invisibly we build with passion's fire
And thought's high sculpturing. Grant us each day
Beautiful burial, sweet death in life,
And peace at last beside the heart's desire!

The Taj Mahal at Agra, North India, was built by the Mohammedan Emperor, Shah Jehan, over the body of his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. It was begun in 1630 and finished in twenty years by twenty thousand workmen.

THE BARGAIN

*Paraphrased from the Marathi of Tukaram,
seventeenth century*

Tuka to Ishwara saith:
We shall take, if so Thou will,
Birth; and learn of life and death.
But we ask that Thou shalt fill

All our life-ways, dark and long,
With remembrance of Thy Face,
And with comrades rich in song
Mindful of our heavenly place.

Thus, in frailty of the flesh
We may travel free from stain;
Miss the snaring senses' mesh,
Aye, and freedom's subtle chain.

Song, and Thee the song to fill
In the space from birth to death,
Grant us these—then have Thy will,
Tuka to Ishwara saith.

Ishwara is a title of Shiva as the Lord of the Universe.

THE PURCHASE

*Paraphrased from the Hindi of Queen Mirabai,
fifteenth century*

I have bought the Herdsman who guards my soul.
“ He is light,” some state;
Some, “ Heavy His weight.”
I know, who have purchased the whole.

I have bought Govinda, and mine He is made.
“ He is cheap,” some fear;
And some, “ He is dear.”
I know, for the price I have paid.

I have bought the Lord, and I wear His sign.
With smiling face
In the market-place
At the beat of my drum He was mine.

I have gazed on the Hidden One eye to eye;
And the price I told
In His palm was gold
I gathered in lives gone by.

*Govinda is Shri Krishna in his aspect as the Hindu “ Good Shepherd ”
of souls.*

The paraphrase reproduces the structure of the original.

CLAY

To commemorate a student-sculptor's first model

I

His eyes with fresh creation shone.
Before him new-made beauty lay.
Deep wonder-eyed
In art's first smarting joy he cried:
“I did not think I could have done
So much with such rough clay!”

II

Brother! if clay unto your fingers' clay
Make answer swift and just
In this high heavenly way;
If “dust to dust”
In beauty wed
Be no poor phrase of parting o'er the dead,
But metaphor of God's own finger-thrust
Breaking our shapeless night to shapen day;
Yea, if our fashioning hands are born of Earth,
And she through them in art find second birth,
And through our flesh reach finer mould
In death's disintegrating cold;
Now may we shed our human arrogance,

We, lonely, self-outcast from sod and sky,
And, underneath the kindred glance
Of Earth's glad suffering eye,
Glimpse the majestic purposes of pain
Crumbling our mortal rust
In some immortal Artist's play;
And in a sunlit new-discovering rain
Of happy tears
Dance with the homeless tribes of driven dust,
And share the ecstasy of trampled clay!

III

Blesséd are they who thus can find
Kinship with clay and sun and wind!
They in the wounds of life's harsh feuds
Pour oil and balm of art's beatitudes!
Blesséd the opened ears
Wherein the music of orchestral spheres
Moves, as upon a stream a murmuring whirl!
Blesséd the seeing eye that in the plash
Of rain finds wealth in pearl on pearl!
And blesséd they who, for the clash
Of their close-grappling wills
Of body, mind and soul
Find weapons wholly meet

Where ocean's charging legions roll,
Or where the steel-bright rivers flash
Out of the resonant scabbards of the hills!
Blesséd the wingéd feet
That move with Hermes-lightness on the rough
Ascending human way,
Comrades, not vassals, of the clay!
Trice blessed they,
Loving all things yet taking none to wife,
Who count abundant life
Good, yet not good enough
For those whose being has its root
Past sound and sight,
Nourished on starry fruit
Plucked from the laden branches of the night!

IV

Master! when our crude lives have won
The stamp that shall Thy touch display,
Perhaps thou too wilt cry,
Thou! even Thou, Artist of earth and sky:
“I did not think I could have done
So much with such rough clay!”

Madanapalle, South India.

TO SAROJINI NAIDU

From a lion great in death
Honey came, a scripture saith.
Yea, and out of ancient song
Sweetness cometh from the strong:
Names that move, but cannot pass,—
Sappho, Dante, Kalidas,
And their singing kindred. Still,
Though we climb a lesser hill,
There are hidden heights to scale
Reckoned not in classic tale;
And on singers of our time
Waits a subtler power of rhyme
That can raise a fairy wind
Laying all the ghosts of mind,
Heady doubts that bend their knee
To the spirit's ecstasy.

Such a wind has moved your wings,
Bird that from life's prison sings!
Caged familiar of the skies
In whose spirit-lighted eyes
India's wisdom, deep and long,
Blossoms lightly into song,
Crowning with a deathless crown
You who sang death's menace down,

And in lyric joy displayed
Strength in weakness perfect made.

Though not yours the sounding wing
Poised on gorgeous questioning,
Or the massy music lent
By a ruder instrument
Blaring all the foolish strife
Between those lovers, Death and Life;
Yours is song in skyey flight
Unlaborious as the light,
Mixed with golden music won
From soul-nearness to the sun,
Native to a coming day
Far upon our human way
When in eyes of all shall shine
What is prophecy in thine.

Wherfore, songstress! on our tongue
Grief for song you might have sung
Perishes in thankfulness
For the gift wherewith you bless
This our day: no strained, profound
Chant in caverns underground,
Nor the sweetness of the strong
Echoed out of ancient song;
But—for loss our deeper gain—
Sweeter sweetness born of pain!

TO RABINDRANATH TAGORE

I thought for golden poetry
In dedicated prose to pay,
Veiling impossibility
In that old kindly courteous way.

But all your flowing tide of fame
Went singing round my echoing shore
When on my page I put your name—
And made my debt but tenfold more!

Yea, and the world that holds your praise
Moves thus between two powers at feud:
Speech that undoes what it essays,
And silence like ingratitude.

Yet, since a sacramental hand
May sanctify the humblest weed,
I lift my love's transforming wand
And give intention for the deed;

With one deep wish that, till the set
Of sun across your song's wide sea,
Our backs may bend with growing debt
For your pure golden poetry!

THE POET TO HIS OTHER SELF

Other Self

When I walk along the street,
Every human face I meet
Seems a trivial burdened elf
Mimicking my baser self!
Between me and the dream I made
They have set a palisade.
I go vainly up and down
Shut in a beleaguered town.

The Poet

Brother! if you would escape
From the chain of size and shape,
And behold your guiding star—
Leave the perpendicular
Where your eye's earth-levelled lance
Breaks on phantom circumstance,
And your ocean-peace is lost
In its shore-waves' clamouring host.
Find a place of grass, and lie
Looking straight into the sky;
Stretched (the thought comes with a shock)

Like Prometheus on his rock.—
Yet, if you the fire would find,
You must pay the price in kind,
Since life's tree must yield as dower
Wood for crucifixion's hour,
Ere the sky-stair can be made
For the soul's high escalade;
Or the thorny circlet blows
To the Spirit's living rose.

Then, your back to solid ground,
You shall know the peace profound,
When your eyesight's mystic Tree
Blooms towards the Mystery
God in Farness writeth clear
For the measure of the Near;
Setting Vastness as a ring
On the hand of Everything;
Furnishing the Whole to house
Great, with Littleness for spouse.

Finding this, your heart will find
Wisdom past the sundering mind.
Eyes of Godward-groping men
Brotherly will greet you . . . Then,
Rise, and take among the throng
Deeper vision, sweeter song.

ODE TO TRUTH

Sing now of Truth!
Lift up the heart's exalted melody
Unto that overshadowing Power
Which on the foaming marge of youth
And age's quiet sea
Setteth from hour to hour
The silver chain of an invisible moon
Veiled from rude gaze as oriental brides;
And marcheth captive our loud-clashing tides,
With all their fretful tune,
Beyond the troubled waters of heart and brain,
To where doth reign
Behind all wavering thought and fluctuant mood,
Past mortal change and stain,
Immortal certitude.

Greatly thine accents down the ages roll
In hoary faiths. Yet, though the labouring Soul
In these find food
To stanch the hunger of the passing day,
Still, Truth! thine utmost plenitude
Calls past these Taverns on the Pilgrim's Way.
Not all of thee thy richest bearer hath;
Not He whose feet trod out the Eightfold Path;
Nor He whose voice the tang of thunder hath,
God Shiva, when earth's evil hath sufficed
To earn His shaking for the nations' good;

Nor the thrice-gentle Christ
On His uplifted Rood.

Nay, not in these, or others great as these,
Though earth's long myriads bend adoring knees,
Art thou all emptied, thou of gods the God,
The authorizing crown, the imperious rod.

Yea, and of all man's thought
On anvils of desire obscurely wrought
To tortured shapings of the twilit brain,
This is the only heresy,

This of man's knees the one idolatry:
To hush thy music to a single strain,
And sharpen thy mild suasion to a goad;
To turn thy heavenly wealth to earthly gain,
Thy cosmic traffic to a rutted road.

Wiselier the Celtic seer in vision saw
Thy snow-white birds that left thy snow-white
brow,
And through the prismatic earth found each a cage
In varying colour of a race and age,
Yet sang one mystic song: for thou
Of earth and heaven art the life and law,
The truthful poise of bird and insect wings,
The speechless loyalty of stone to stone,
The essence of all seen and unseen things,
Behind our tinted bow the stainless white,
The single ending of our scattered sight.

Glory to thee, Great Radiance dimly felt!
And to the Dark be glory in her degree

Against whose curtain we have glimpse of thee
Narrowed to stars to light their age's shame.
And honour to those on earth who never knelt
Save to thy Holy Name;
Strong souls who dared inquisitorial doom
In thine inexorable necessity.
Oh! vain for them the cowled and flickering gloom;
Vainly the faggots flared, the smoke up-curled!
Fire unto fire they calmly went;
And when from bodily chain the soul was rent,
Fire from the fire immortally they came,
Unbodied Powers kindling a subtler flame
To burn the wood, hay, stubble from the world!

 And we, as they,
In this our great incalculable day,
To thee, O Truth! for succour turn,
Parent of all for which our spirits yearn—
Peace, Freedom, Beauty, Love.
Thou hast alone the secret, thou the power,
Omnipotent, omniscient Truth!

 In some heart-easing hour
Out of our flesh to draw the ravening tooth
Of war and tyranny and hate,
And from our demon-haunted state
To lift us angel-high.
Thou art the alchemist whose art
From heavy forgings of the flaming heart
Canst mint new coinage for a realm divine;

Wizard who hast the authentic gesturings
To turn earth's water into heavenly wine
Tasting at once of our deep human springs
And the celestial vintage of the sky. . .
Thou of thy planets art the parent sun;
And all creation's feet in cadence run
To thy compelling flute,
O hidden Lover! whose most urgent suit
Halts not on misty frontiers of thy realm,
But in vast importunity of love
Doffs robe and helm,
And, as doth move
One life to countless blooms from one deep root,
Feelest towards us from the invisible lands
With mild compassionate hands.
Yea, like Lord Krishna with the dancing maids
In India's holy shades,
Thou laughest singly by the side of each,
Takest on thee the stammer of our speech,
And wearest the rude guise
Borrowed from fancies of our dream-dark eyes.
Thy touch gives verity to joy. Our grief
Of thy great yearning is a beckoning wraith.
Thy mute disclosure shineth in the leaf
That with its season keepeth punctual faith.
Thou art the rumour through the gossip day;
And all our nights are streaked with flaming
brands

Seeking the near, communicable way
Our darkness understands,
To call us from the clay.

What if the splendours of accomplished noon
Not yet shall blind our dawning's cadent moon;
Though, for the House of Life that shall endure,
Slow, slow and sure
Thou labourest patiently in earth's crude stuff;
Enough, O conquering Truth! enough
That for the speeding of the start
Thou grantest us our glimpse of goal,
For they who catch the vision of the whole
May greatly dare the part.

A NUPTIAL ODE

*For the marriage of wave and cloud, commonly
called a waterspout, in the Bay of Bengal, 1919*

We that in ships unto the sea go down,
Lord it in pride
Over the tied
Untravelled town.
Yet, for all upon our tongue,
Still have we left unsung
To the high utmost of its song-estate
Morning's new signal from an opened gate,
And midnight's myriad-candled rites

Whereof we, acolytes
Into deep mystery initiate,
Chant not at all, or only in symbol chant.

Hush! even now,
Touched by vision's hierophant
On panting breast
And rapt interpretative brow,
We part the chamber-curtains of the west,
And in the trance of twilight see
The primal mystery.

Lo! vastly there
The fathering Cloud, eager from sleep,
Shakes out his knotty hair,
And towards the couchant mothering Deep
Puts forth an arm thrilling and tentative
With what may live
Of solace, agony and bliss
In his tremendous kiss.
And she,
Fruitful yet ever virgin Sea,
Moves towards the whirling, flameless fire
In his arm's irresistible desire;
Yet falls away
In swooned reluctance from his passion's sway,
Pulled with heaving breast and breath
Between the lure and horror of life and death.
For she who of her being gives
Life's plasmic substance unto all that lives,

Out of this hour's wild consanguinity
Of twin-born Cloud and Sea
Shapes elemental life to be;
And in dim ages past the figuring mind
She shall from earth's long barrows thieve away
The silent generations of our clay
Hearsed by the body-snatching rain and wind;
Yea, for our dust—
Her own that she has given us in trust—
Shall be the ultimate urn
Whatever way our deathless pilgrim turn.

Oh! there—a sudden twilight star
Throws from afar
A barrier of silence to our chant,
And holds it hesitant
On this side of the starry verge of song
That only to the spirit may belong,
Nor rudely may be bent
Unto that dissonant accompaniment
That now affrights the ear:
No sweet celestial choiring angel-clear,
Nor the persuasive Orphic note
To man and beast and tree heart-intimate,
But elemental music, rude, remote,
Round which dread swooping issues wait;
The awful piping of a sea-hoofed Pan
Rutting through weedy glades
And monster-haunted shades

Native no more to soul-awakened man.

 Ah! unto thee,
Most fiercely wooed, most marriageable Sea,
Who towards thy fiery moment now dost pant,
Goes not the last abandon of our chant.
For though stooped Science dredge thy dark abyss,
And stalk the worm upon thy fretted brink
For our beginnings, lo! our spirit's reins
Know the sure inward pull
Of hands made steady and cool
From washings in a calmer wave than thine,
And a less heady drink.
Yea, though through all men's veins
Runs yet the fiery tincture of thy phlegm,
Haunting their dreamings like a poisonous wine
With Paphian ghosts that pluck their being's hem;
Not unto them or thee
Bend we the final knee,
Or yield the immortal spirit's anadem,
We the twice-born
Of thine old night and a still shrouded morn.
 Yet must we dedicate
Unto the utmost measure of thy state
Full share of praiseful song
To thee, so vastly patient at the thong
Of thy great binder; **thee** who hast
Borne our amœbean protoplast.
On thy swiftly turning gyre

Thou hast upswung our slow-compounded clay,
Nor whimpered underneath the dire
Aeonian labours of the shaping Soul
Through and beyond the fingers of thy spray
Towards, ah! what dim, what distant goal,
What moulded vessel with what godlike stamp?
Though our ascension's gradual ramp
Bear us beyond thy trouble, still to thee
Goes out the grateful heart
For thine ungrudging part
In those high aids of heaven's wizardry—
Hands that thy rapture, soul-transmuted, stirs
To toil as heaven's artificers;
Feet that to spirit purposes have climbed;
Lips that celestially have rhymed.
For these to thee our thanking head is bent,
Even as player for fair instrument,
O primal Undine! void of soul
Till through thy hollow heart shall roll
A subtler urge
Than moves the slow prismatic surge
On golden, long, irradiant sands
In sleepy orient lands.

Yet wherefore even our song's most vain
pretence
Of songful precedence,
When each responsive throat
But resonates unto one mystic note

As the dark Master, for His bliss, hath willed?
Now let our chant be filled
With joy that each may echo unto each
A syllable of that majestic speech!
What if man's destiny it be to float
On yet unsprouted pinions of the soul
About life's hidden pole;
And thou bestride life's dim circumference
Till life and we and thou go hence
At a deep inward call;
Lo! at the final bacchanal
A festive cosmic lip
Shall happily take shape
From man's ripe-rounded grape,
And from thy pledging goblet sip,
Yea to the seas drink of the seas
Even to their lees!

Now is it meet that every head be bowed
While from yon palpitating cloud
Appalling urgency feels to and fro;
And unto it at last, at last, doth go,
Past all alarm,
In great surrender utterly,
Tremblingly white of arm,
The upstrained invitation of the Sea
Unto some fanged immeasurable bliss
Whose word of rapture is a mighty hiss,
As Wave and Cloud,

Vast coiled with vast, in reeling passion vowed,
In awful nuptials madly blent
Are clasped and spent!

A PLANETARY CONJUNCTION

Over the Pacific Ocean

Venus and Jupiter sat side by side
On a cloud-bank over the buried sun;
But in the silver mirror of the tide
Their sea-washed limbs were mingled into one.

And yet, if this was really so
I do not know;
For suddenly my eyes
(Duped by the protean wizardry
Of image-changing sea
And magic-making skies)
Saw instead a stem upshoot
From a deeply hidden root;
Shoot in silver up the sea
(Cooling the tropic ardour of the tide
Round Asia's dimly folded hem)
And find fulfilment, godly proud,
On a soft couch of cloud,
Where, loverly,
Two silver flowers upon a single stem
On a cloud-bank above the furrowed tide,
Venus and Jupiter bloomed side by side.

But whether this was so,
Or whether this
Was but the frail caught shadow of the bliss
That moves and gleams
When the Mage-Master's fingers throw
The vast reticulation of His dreams
Across these windows of our outer night
To lure us to the veritable Light,
I cannot tell. But this I know,
That godlike ones have bathed Their shining
limbs
In the thick turgid sea
Of our mortality,
Not only in divine theophany,
But verily Themselves, yea verily!
For in the hour when the brain's fen-fire dims,
And the blood's flickering whims
Make of themselves a white
And steady light,
Then have They crossed my sight,
Even as seer and prophet saith.
That this is so,
My lifted hand here witnesseth.
Yea, well I know
The feel of Them about me in the day.
Their footfall friendly makes the loneliest way.
Deep in the sevenfold furnace of despair
Another Form is there;

And in the ritual cavern of the night,
Behind the doors of sound and sight,
My spirit joins Their high austere delight,
And knows that our pale wavering planets are
Conjunct with an unwavering Star.

But not alone Their shining limbs they lave
In our thick turgid wave:
Oh! I have tasted sap in our harsh stem
That would push us up to Them,
Even to Their native heavenly place,
Had we but grace
To set our pulses to the rhythmic thrill
Of that importunate Will,
And climb into great silence silvery
Out of the muddy rootings of our deep
Where blindly ravening monsters creep,
Up to the mirroring surface of the sea.
Oh! we might unto heavenly stature spring,
Yea, loverly,
As Jupiter and Venus, side by side
High-symbolling across the tide,
Godlike with godlike hold great whispering
On Love's rare-footed lofty crest,
And, heart with deep heart satisfied,
Fulfil the Spirit's ancient quest,
Immortal bridegroom with immortal bride.

MILL-WHEELS

A miller stood beside his mill
Under a larch-clad, pine-topped hill,
And heard, or fancied he could hear,
From his two millwheels, rumbling near,
Words with their creaky gurgling blent
That sounded like an argument.

One wheel, upon whose sparkling head
Power from above was richly shed,
Moved with a patronising bow,
And scattered largesse from his brow,
And offered to the thirsty lands
The gift of water from his hands.
One gathered from his look and tone
He deemed those riches were his own.

The other wheel, about his feet
Found life resistless, cold and fleet;
A stream that bore him from the ground
And whirled him in a fruitless round.
No drop for self his toil could save
Between the cradle and the grave;
And always, in his ceaseless grind,
He turned a threat in his dark mind.

Then, as they argued swift and pat
That this is this and that is that,
And bandied all the foolish lies
That men and millwheels hold as wise,
The listening miller set his head
Sideways, and subtly smiled, and said:

“ My friends, high up the larch-clad hill
From one deep spring your life doth spill;
And miles beyond my farthest crop
One sea your brawling speech will stop.
Yea, boast you high, or mourn you low,
One Power is in your seaward flow;
And while you scatter praise and blame,
You do My grinding just the same! ”

And then the millwheels seemed to cease;
And on the world there fell great peace,
As if a back had dropped a load;
And I went thinking down the road
Under the larch-clad, pine-topped hill
Where stood the Miller by His mill
Smiling with eyes of jewelled flame . . .
I quite forgot to ask His Name!

Kutsukake, Japan, 1919.

MOON-WORSHIP

Paraphrased from the Japanese

Day's lord forgets, but night's dear queen remembers.
Brothers! rejoice that from our fiery past
Faithfully doth last
One of all its dead and scattered embers.
Moon, O Moon ash-white!
Thou dost call
Thy true lovers all
Round the legend-haunted hearth of night,
Friend with friend, not rival;
Living sharers in thy grace;
Yea, and in thine unforgetting face
Long dead lovers of thee find survival.

Round thine enthronéd feet a wind hath stirred
Full of the passion of the quick and dead
Who whisper towards thee, and with lifted head
Await thy sweet confiding word.
Alas! ungifted like a mortal woman,
Language thy snow-chaste lip eschews:
Only the lonely dedicated muse
Thou dost silently illumine.
Yet, to him who prayeth,
Dreading the chill of dark oblivion:

“ Fade all, if thy remembrance be but won!”
Something secret sayeth
For his heart’s deep recompense:
“ None who worship me
Shall forgotten be.”

Wherefore, brother! ages hence
Spreading, as once I spread, a praiseful wing,
When in love’s ritual you con her,
Singing then as now I sing
At the evening’s fall,
Ah! recall
That worshipfully I too looked upon her.

A FLOWER-OFFERING

From the Japanese of the Empress Komio

Flowers for the Lord!—Yet wherefore spread
Defilement from unworthy hands,
Or to the Living give the dead?—
Here in the windy meadow-lands
I offer these ungathered flowers
To Buddhas whom the past set free,
To Buddhas of the present hours,
Wild flowers for Buddhas yet to be.

POET AND CICADA

Poet

What a funny song you sing
In the giant *sungi* tree:
Me me me me meeeeeee!
Always, on your lofty shelf,
Are you thinking of yourself?
(*Me me me me meeeeeee.*)

Does not something thrill your wing
For another brown blind thing
Singing in another tree:
Me me me me meeeeeee?

Cool of twilight, heat of noon,
Till the death of sun and moon
Will you never, never, never,
Never change your tune:
Me me me me meeeeeee?

Cicada

What a funny song *you* sing,
Poet! in your tree of life:
Joy, sorrow, sweetheart, wife,
Or some distant misty thing.

Aye, for all your haughty airs,
Blending blasphemy and prayers,
Who sings nearer to the truth?—
Not your burning lie of youth,
Or your age's mumbling tooth:
Morning spent in blind desire;
Evening grudging morn its price:
Fire, that has contempt for ice,
Turned to ice contemning fire!

Morn or dusk or night or noon,
Always *you* are in your tune:—
“ Whence *we* come, whither *we* go,”
Or “ *We* know not what *we* know.”
Chut! your versing, rhymed or free,
Rings but changes on *me me!*

Who then has the braver breath,—
You whose song is one long strife
With a shadow you call death?
I who nothing know but life?
Who is wiser, you or I?

Poet

I shall think of a reply.

Nikko, Japan, 1919.

PROCESSIONAL ODE

*for the placing of the mask of Francis Thompson in
the home of Yoné Noguchi, the poet, in Japan, 1920*

Behold his face!—“ This? No! his living face,
Sworn to allegiance with the dust,
Made pact with Death,
And signed away his lyrical breath
For some dark boon beyond our moth and rust.
Clay unto clay,
Too soon he went the dreaded human way.
Those eyes grew dim
That shone with the flying glory of seraphim
On heavenly embassage. That aeolian frame,
Made vocal by every wind of song, became
A thing of horror to shrink from, to hustle away
Clay under clay.
From the mouth of the worm,
From the worm’s unappeasable mouth,
No art of man had power to hold him fast
When dry-lipped Death, in his bacchic fever-storm,
With our singer’s life had quenched his drouth,
And his emptied vessel on the ground had cast,
Smearing mortality’s ultimate disgrace
On his cold, blind, songless face!”

O ye of little faith!
How could he suffer silence and eclipse
Who took from off the Muses' lips
'No reedy echo of a blasted wraith,
But song's immortal secret. Starry-willed,
He from the blare and clash of life distilled
Celestial music, throwing back to heaven
Heaven's voice with Earth's own sister-music filled,
Stretching the rapture of his hymn
From snow-flake unto seraphim.
Lo! past the "Lampads seven"
He has winged his flight
In music, incense and light,
Carrying rumour to the flaming Throne
Of Man Promethean grown,
Who on the hearth of earth blows up a fire,
Stolen from clay, transmuted from desire,
That yet shall burn with fragrance of our sod
Within the House of God!
He has ascended to his natal place
Who for a season to the earth was lent,
And unto us has sent
This comforter.—Behold his face!
Life's figurehead backed by invisible sails
Filled with adventuring gales
On seas beyond our cramped horizon's ring;
An open book
For unborn lovers dimly gathering,

Where they who wisely look
May read, in script no passing years can dim,
The very meaning of him!

O ye who, in the presence of the pall,
Chant gloomy psalms of life's distress,
Wailing that nearer fruit is nearer fall,
How close is ripe to rottenness,
Counting your house no more than wood and stone,
Your selves none other than your flesh and bone!
Raise now instead a welcoming strain,
For, lo! the face you lost is here again,
Purged of corruption's stain.
Well have your heart-strings and his orphaned song
Cried out against the silence of the grave
And slow time's lapsing wave.
Before the long
Deep genuflection of his vested word
Death dare not pass unheard
Love's cry for sight.—Behold! behold his face,
Reborn of earth and art's transfiguring flame,
The same yet not the same,
Fixed in the front of Time whose hand can trace
No quick decay on this our memory's norm;
For before Death had driven his plough
Across his cheek and brow,
Song's wordless clay-born sister-craft
Full in the face of old Oblivion laughed,
And snatched this fadeless relic of his form

From the mouth of the worm!

Now let hot grief take faith's cool healing kiss;
Love's whisper tell
How the dim Gardener crushed his leaf to smell
His own involvéd sweetness. Count not this
But a cicatrix on the wound of life,
O ye bereaved! Lift up your eyes and see
No puny changeling for the unchilded wife,
But, more than perishing flesh, the visible he,
The hieroglyph of the soul's mystery
Beyond life's transient griefs and joys.
Here, of his many faces this doth last,
The sum, the summit; life's whole meaning cast
Into one look all looks had flickered toward;
One coin compounded of his squandered hoard;
One silence built on song's high equipoise!

Now we, to sound of the heart's drum and fife,
Though secretly our eyes be sweetly wet,
Here in the front of his closed house of life
His hatchment proudly set;
Proudly, yet not in vainly swelling pride
But with deep humbleness, as his, clear-eyed,
That held his music but an answering strain
When the Celestial Fiddler drew His bow
In earshot of the soul's taut tympanum,
And sands of speech, dead scattered else and dumb,
Sprang to the pattern-dance of hidden strings
With stars and leaves and waves and wings.

Come now within the presence, feet unshod,
Where art and song, child laughter, friendship free,
Make for our treasure fit reliquary.
Wave each your burning incense-rod
Till it smoke forth, snaky as maenad's hair
Curled by a wind that blows its old despair
To some strange solace touched with heavenly thrill.
Draw near and look your fill.
Look where, no more of casual ardours born,
Freed from life's fear-haunted morn,
And age's undesiring hands and feet,
Out of the marriage of cool clay and clay,
Song's Minerva springs complete,
Born the Jupiterian way.

Last, ere with forehead thrice upon the ground
We take our leave with reverence profound,
Mark you that mouth's curved sweet-lipped line,
Shut as if tasting the new-trodden wine
Of choicest vintages of speech
From high-trailed branches past our longest reach,
Ungathered save by those whose feet have made
The spirit's escalade.
Beneath that brow behold those fallen lids
Cured of our darkness by what magic touch?
Oh! we do wonder much
What stellar maze their franchised vision thrids;
How takes each star
The "abashless inquisition" of those eyes

That even in life's winkered glance
Caught the cosmic ordonnance,
And now doth find
High confirmation and the amplitude
Of the trajectory of his arrowy mind.
Yea, for his faith's reward,
Stands he as Moses stood,
Ablink at the stripped splendour of the Lord;
But with the poet's subtler sight
Nearer the flame doth draw,
And on a holier Sinai's loftier height
Receives the Tables of a deeper law!

A mask of Francis Thompson's face was taken during his life-time. A copy was presented to Yoné Noguchi, the Japanese poet, during a visit to England. It hung obscurely in the entrance-hall of his home outside Tokyo. On the request of the writer of the above Ode it was moved ceremonially to the poet's study.

LOVE IN EXILE

I

Love was our feast, our worship, our desire
And its fulfilment. Love blew out the light
At day's dear mutual end. Love watched the night,
And to sweet music plucked each new day's wire.
Then, because men of love in season tire,
Said Love: "These twain love on in time's despite;
So, lest their love too soon reach heavenly height
And share our throne, let severance damp their fire."

O jealous Love! my heart grafted on hers,
And hers on mine, have fruit past passion's flower:
Each sundered part rounds to a wedded whole;
Each whole unto sublimer union stirs;
Nor thou, O Love! nor life nor death hast power
To break the immortal bonds of soul and soul!

II

Those happy islands make me sick at heart
Because towards each brave heavenward-lifted face
Its lover Sea hurries in wide-armed race
To take and give in love's dear mutual art.
But my once wave-kissed world is fallen apart,
Fallen sheer apart. All ocean, flat of face,

I am, or all dead earth, dead for love's grace
To fructify what now is arid smart.

Cry out, O heart! cry till the silence rings;
Cry as dry river-beds cry out for rain!
Cry as the Deep before the first of things,
Till Love's great angel spread his brooding wings,
And Love's fair earth and heaven are built again,
Sea-kissed, and watered by life-giving springs!

III

Now must I feed on faith, but very thin
The feast is. I am troubled by their cries,
These clamouring sceptics, arms, and ears, and eyes.
One asks: "Where is the touch that we should win?"
Another: "When does whispering-time begin?"
And one: "When comes that look so brave and
wise?"
And from blank present each the past denies,
Says: "Being not, she never can have been!"

O far, far love! I have no argument
To stay their unbelief—save you alone.
And, lacking that, I turn from them apart,
And, by the saving power that Love has lent,
Upon my mind, eyes, ears and arms have grown
To see, hear, hold you to my dreaming heart!

IV

Thought! I would have you take exceeding care
That when in the dark you find my dear love's bed,
You make no flutter of wings about her head,
Nor with your step disturb her dream's high stair.
Rather, I'd have you in the silent air
Be an untroubling perfume vaguely spread,
That so her sleep be happily bestead.
This do, O thought! and we rich gain shall share.

But when the wind of dawn through fern and tree
Wakens the birds to their accustomed psalms,
And her to exile from remembered bliss;
Ah thought! be then no thought, but instantly
Be very I, soul, body; be these palms
Cool on her forehead, this good-morning kiss!

IN TIME OF RAIN

I wondered why the rain
Fell in such haste,
And why the river raced
With such melodious pain
Down to the fan-spread plain,
Out to the vast Pacific main;
Till at a pine-log bridge,
Where fly and midge
Circled in dervish dance,
I caught her conquering glance,
The pink and slender Meadow-sweet
That, on light elfin feet,
Stretched from her grass-green bank,
And, in a boldly bashful maiden prank,
Where the chaste River, knightly dressed
In steely glitter, coldly past her pressed,
His bright young cheek mischievously caressed
With passionate pink finger-tip
Through which did slip
Such bliss that from it there was no dissembling:
He trembled—and she trembled at his trembling.
Alack!
There was no turning back;
For, fast behind,
Instant-made suitors crowded, blind
To all desire save one:

To reach the sea-set ladder of the sun,
And climb the walls of cloud, and spring
With eager wing
On to the hunched volcano's back,
And seek again the zigzag track
Down to the pine-log bridge
Where dances fly and midge,
And touch again the elfin feet
Of the pink passionate Meadow-sweet,
And feel again with happy sigh
That wonderful caressing finger-tip
Through which, from Beauty's soul, doth slip
Such bliss that (I confess it without shame)
Were I that River, I
Would do the same.

Yes,
Here I will confess
That this my song doth press
On pilgrimage as fleet
To end as sweet.
For I as perfect bliss
Have known as this;
Not for a moment, nay, but in a pool
Of green, ecstatic quiet, spirit-cool,
Known love's long rule
Unto the rapturous full;
Till came a sudden spate
Out of dim hills of fate,

And swept me forth, singing in exquisite pain,
Down to the separating plain,
Out to the lonely main.
Oh! I have swarmed up ladders of high prayer
Into faith's upper air;
And I have yearned me cloudlike towards a land
Stained by no faithless hand;
And I do think
That on the cloistered brink
Of love's ecstatic pool,
Heart-ardent, spirit-cool,
The noble sister of the Meadow-sweet,
Gold-hearted Marguerite,
Feels the premonitory shake
Of winds that soon will break
In language rumorously of coming rain
That seeks its home again.

Oiwake, Nagano, Japan.

LOVE AND SPRING

What is this perfume soothing the harsh air,
This living glow
Stirring the melting snow
That shuffles like a serpent to its lair?
No cherries bloom yet for a woman's hair;

Yet on love's business to and fro
The sparrows come and go,
And chirp derision while dull poets sing:
“ Love comes with spring.”

What do they know of love who only know
Love's phantom in their passion's twisted glass?
Love that with spring doth come, with spring
may go;
But love, true love, with seasons cannot pass.
Love is no wheel-slave to a tyrant's whims;
Dreads not the revelation of the light;
Nor one unconsecrated throb doth feel
When in the lantered tavern of the night
The cup of life o'er-brims.
Nay, Love itself doth turn the cosmic wheel.
It is God's hand, and spring His changing glove.
So chirp the sparrows to and fro:
“ Love comes with spring,
You sing!
Ah no, no no!
Love comes not with the spring
Or any passing thing.
Spring comes with love!”

Tokyo, March, 1920.

LOVE'S RETURN

One throbbing cloud on ocean glows
Towards one that broods on land.
From each to each the lightning throws
An eager fire-veined hand.

O heart! whose prophet-vision plumbs
Bliss deep even unto pain,
We know from what high rapture comes
This wild relief of rain—

Then peace. Beloved! glad rivers haste
Towards their great love, the sea;
But, after dance and shouting, taste
Fulfilment silently.

So, when our yearning reaches goal,
Forgive my lips their wrong
If in the clasp of soul and soul
Dies out the need for song!

East China Sea, April, 1920.

THREE WHITE EAGLES

Three white eagles looked at me
From a tall palmyra tree.
That was all.—But suddenly
I went dark with lightning glaring

In my head; and thunder blaring
Shook me to my bended knee
At the foot of some strange Tree,
Bare save for one criss-cross bough
Where, with spikes about each brow,
God the Father, God the Mother,
God the Son and Elder Brother,
Three in One and One in Three,
Looked and looked and looked at me.

. . . I woke, and with new opened eyes
Saw the last wrinkle of disguise
Fold on a Face that hid away
Behind the vizor Night-and-day . . .
And from the tall palmyra tree
Only three eagles looked at me.

Madanapalle.

HALF-PAST FIVE

Beetles with midriff ringed with red,
Pendulous bodies, sunset stains
In flickering wings, and overhead
Leftward and rightward-spreading planes,
Bursting the day's hot brassy gyve,
Buzz briskly forth at half-past five.

Rivers that never knew a fish,
Bone-dry, save once or twice a year
When heaven crowds seawards with a swish,
Hold for these hosting clans no fear.
“God wills we soar, while others dive.
We cross the stream at half-past five.”

Round here lies Arcot. History's sleeve
Wipes out the marks of sword and flame.
They came, they saw—they went; and leave
India and beetles much the same.
These chant an older name than Clive
As they fly forth at half-past five:—

“*Om!* Over, out! Who whimpers: ‘Night,
Night comes with rain and jackal’s yell’?
God gave us wings to give Him flight.
That our sole care is.” Which is well,
For swift birds punctually arrive
Whose dinner-time is half-past five.

Beetle and river-bed and bird,
And goat-boy with his bamboo flute,
In a lone poet’s heart have stirred
Things that are wild to be afoot:
High dreams and songs that ache and strive
To find *their* wings at half-past five.

Madanapalle.

A DEAD SCARAB

Never rose in Grecian air,
To a life gone otherwhere,
Half so fair a cenotaph
As this beetle's body; chaff
From death's threshing; skyey wrack
Flung upon a jungle track;
Turquoise and opal thrown away
In the pleasure of a day!

What of mighty bulk and plan!
Here, beyond the skill of man,
God had polished with His sleeve
Tints of iridescent eve
To a subtle wavering sheen;
Blue that melted into green;
And a tint that hardly knew
Whether it was green or blue,
Or a magic tincture cast
When a seraph's pinion passed
Scattering splendours not its own
From the rainbow round the Throne.

Then, as towards the ground I bent
Rapt in silent wonderment,
Half a hundred beetles flew
Past with such loud joy, I knew

If my blood would stand but still,
I might see God on the hill
Furbishing with all His might
Creatures for an hour's delight;
Breathing on them with His breath
Glory blent of life and death;
Loosing on the scented breeze
Exquisite futilities!

Ah! what glints of laughter lurk,
At such heavenly handiwork,
Round His mouth and in His eyes
I but mistily surmise;
Or the buzz about His head
As the souls of beetles dead,
Flying back into His hand,
Chant: "Oh! to that glimmering land
We would fain go forth anew,
Kindred of the transient dew;
For immortal Beauty's sake
Mortal habitation make;
And for wages sip again
Honey from the lip of pain!"

Therefore God the Artist laughed
As He plied His handicraft;
Toiled all night to speed by day
Travellers on the Pilgrims' Way.

Such His labour's urgent zest
Not an hour had He for rest.
“So,” I said, “it is not fair
To disturb Him with my prayer;
And tonight I go to bed,
Sins unpardoned, prayers unsaid,
Wondering, till my light is spent,
What the Egyptian scarab meant!”

GORGEOUS LIES

*Nought that enters the eye
Is itself in simple sooth.
Only the poet's painted lie
Limneth the face of truth!*

A frog jumps after a fly—
And the steel-hard face of the lake
Wrinkles to smiling mouths of sky.
The swimming water-snake,
Darting death with its fang,
Wriggles to rhythm of light.
Reversed, the mountains hang
As boughs of blossoming night
Wherethrough, day's season done,
From the gathered fruit of day
The pressed-out juices run,

Rich red through silver and grey;
Wine of God's gladness given
To earth as the pledgings pass
From the tankard of heav'n to the Heav'n
In the lake's over-brimming glass.
Wagtails flirting fly
With a flash at each splashing tip.
A swirl of vapour on high
Is a golden sailing-ship
Carrying merchandise
Of myth and marvel and dream
To the harbours of the wise.
Ah! what compassionate gleam
In the eye of evening wakes,
Whose brooding ecstasy
To deep commingling shakes
The heart of the world and me?
Mystery thrilling to tears
Through the twilit sedges sings.
The glory of God appears
Through trivial inglorious things!

*Nought to the seeing eye
May be sung for itself in sooth.
Only the poet's gorgeous lie
Telleth the simple truth!*

Madanapalle.

BITTER AND SWEET

Bitter aloes give a flower,
Pendant bells waxen white.
Here the honeybirds have dower
Of the honeybird's delight.

Black beneath from beak to tip
Of a joyous jerking tail,
Yellow-necked with yellow wing
On the aloe stem they swing,
Sip and cheep, and sip, and sail
Out and back, cheep and sip,
Till the eye of one who sees
Glimpses Beauty's mysteries;
And the joy of wing and leaf,
Swinging spray and waxen bell,
Through the thrilling heart-strings tell
Tears have other springs than grief.

Now they scan the bells with ear
Sideways set as if to hear
Honey-music's crystal strains
Echoed from the Earth's deep veins;
Singing, crystal beat by beat,
Through the heart of all that lives;
Ringing through the swinging sweet
Flower the bitter aloe gives.

A SONG OF STILLNESS

Stand still, my soul! and see
Salvation from the Lord.
Chariots and men let be!
Oblivion's wave be poured
On all pursuing thee,
That up from Egypt roared
Deafness on what may be
Only in stillness heard!
Ocean and earth yield up
To men who grasp and hoard!
Pharaoh his fate let fill!
Ours, soul! the standing still
At the revealing word.
For us enough a cup
Empty for what is poured
From fruit of one tall tree
With food and water stored.
This, and a space of time
Sweet with the grace of rhyme.
Still, still, my soul! Oh! see
About our quiet feet
The squirrel strangely stirred
To mute companionship,
And overhead the fleet
Arcana of the bird
Passing from lip to lip

Divine discovery.

And, soul! behold at dark,
When frogs rain-drunken croak,
The fireflies' throbbing spark;
Heart of the yearning night
Breaking in beats of light;
Flashes of fairy fire
A thousand hammers smite
Shaping one will entire
With simultaneous stroke.

Still, soul! Oh! very still!
Lest we escape the thrill
Of utmost mystery
That opened eyes may greet,—
Celestial splendours curled
In this most poignant-sweet
God-blossom of a world,
That wake, with ancient smart,
Nostalgia of the heart,
Home-hunger of the will.

Oh! that disclosure come
To still and crystal sight,
Let all our mouths be dumb;
Earthward our eyes be bent
In holy sacrament,
Finding in dew-damp sod
Body and blood of God.

Lo! signal to the wise,
Now from our earth arise,
Moulded of sky and clay,
The pillared fire by night,
The pillar of cloud by day,
That cry: "No promised land
Lies far, but here at hand;
Here, where you dreaming drew
To break your day's duress;
And all the ways hereto
Are ways of quietness!"

BENEFICENT BEAUTY

That thing which I have left undone,
Or, done, has failed what thou hast willed,
Forgive, O Beauty! as the sun
Forgives the flower that he has killed!
And, more, forgive my sceptic laugh
That I should bow in songless shame
To you, since you must shoulder half
The blame, if there is aught to blame!
For here, within your pulse's reach,
Where Venus counterfeits your eye,
Great silence is the seemliest speech!
We shall have singing by and by.

I know that on a hidden vine
Hangs, for the gathering, song's full fruit.
But lips aglow with present wine
Have little breath to fill a flute!
Perhaps a day will come when I,
While thundering echoes round me roll,
Shall raise your ringing glories high,
And clash them from the towering soul.

Meanwhile, to hear your whisper float
When dayspring shakes the sleeping trees;
At noon to watch your gilded boat
Flash through the spume of sunny seas,
Sweet is; and sweet, with shadows blent,
To taste your deep and silent bliss,
Your thrill from far aloofness sent
Along the moonbeam's holy kiss,
When you at sleep-time on my bed
Empty the jasmine's perfume jars,
And draw around my dreaming head
The sequin-coverlet of stars.

So fastened are my foolish eyes,
O Beauty! on your glamorous ways,
I have not leisure to grow wise
And old enough to sing your praise!

DESTRUCTIVE BEAUTY

Deirdre and Helen—names
They gave you passing by:
Emain and Troy in flames—
Your answer to their sigh.
O hand to which ours have gone,
Beggars for rest and meat!
You sow, where we have sown,
Fierce poppies through our wheat;
Flinging on dull content
Destructive Beauty's shine;
Torch-trailing foxes sent
Through the fields of the Philistine!

Deirdre and Helen! we
Who loved you long ago,
Still as felicity
Count your most shattering blow;
Knowing that, till the bread
Be broken, the wine spilled,
Love's feast cannot be spread,
Love's utmost be fulfilled.
Else were our dreaming vain,
Robbed of the end whereto
Wrestles the heart and brain—
Lost, to be lost in you!

Deirdre and Helen! take
What name, what shape you please;
But for your lovers' sake
Grant us no deadening ease
With some poor perfect gift
Staling and swiftly spent;
Rather, our vision lift
Through high bewilderment
Unto a purer pride,
Whether our singing give
Sorrow because you died,
Laughter that still you live!

Deirdre is the Irish Helen, Emain the Irish Troy.

BRAHMA

Lovingly now I come into your midst, my sisters and
brothers,
For the time of love's forgetting again comes round.
I shall draw you close to my heart as the hearts of
unborn children to the hearts of their mothers;
And of all you were I shall lose the sight and sound.
We shall be as one; yea, you the mesh be one
with me the encircling net,
And, being one, forget.

But when again I am wishful to know you as you are,
And knowing you as you are, to know myself as I am,
I shall roll between us a dark and a flaming star,
And a whirlwind's dance, and a grey sea's ghastly
calm;

I shall find me a hiding-place in a shattered rock,
And a dark place under a blasted tree;
And there your daylit assurance shall tease and mock
With my twilit mystery.

For I am the Voice that calls, and I am the Silence
that, after the Voice, denies;
The Shade that allures your search, and the Blaze
that darkens your eyes;
The Anchorite who scars my flesh (that is yours)
with my whips of joy and pain,
Till out of my depths I turn my face to the height
(that is yours) again.

Then lovingly shall I come into your midst, my sisters
and brothers, as the blood to the heart,
When love's white night of oblivion dawns beyond
the sundering day that sets;
For love that remembers is love that is driven apart,
But love at one, forgets.

KARTIKEYA

I

When you, O battling legions! were at peace,
I waged stout war against you; smote you deep,
Deep in the brain; and left your hungry hand
Less powerful by the powerful strokes I gave.
But now you are at war, I kiss your lips,
I stroke your hand, I speak you fair. But now
My kiss is falsely flavoured, and my hand
Goes furtively at night across your fields,
Streaking with weeds the harvest of your dreams.
My foot moves close with yours. Lo! I am one
With your proud marching hosts. But they, being
blind,
See not the hidden circuit of my tread,
The subtle pull of the vast quiet sun
On your dull earthiness, that silently
Shapes to a circle your fool-vaunted line,
And leads you home through triumph to defeat.
O red, far-gazing eyes, how dark, how dark!
That mark not in your strength's most prosperous
hour
The upward push of a deep-hidden shoot
Whose fruit is death to death; a little thought
Green and all noiseless, whose invincible
Young weakness puts its shoulder to all power
To render it implacably to dust.

Wherefore I shall not waste myself in blows
That would but smite you into hardness,
Provoking you to life. Nay, wiselier, I
Shall push you softly down the way to death
With a thin silent dagger in your back,
My blade of acquiescence. For white death
Comes not by imposition of red hands;
But springs from inner seed. So surely I
Shall round you, goad you, smiling brotherly,
To that deep hour of self-discovery
Which shall be loud with laughter that brings peace.

II

Thus saith the Lord of Learning and of War:
“O ye who seek a path to perfect life!
It runs not through the brain’s dim caverns, nor
Along the ruined fields of flaming strife.

“Behold! I show the ancient double path
Of Power and Knowledge moving in accord.
Each in the other its fulfilment hath.
Tread ye that way to Life!” Thus saith the Lord.

Kartikeya is the God of war and knowledge, according to Hindu tradition.

SURYA-GITA

Sun-songs for Rabindranath Tagore

SUNSET

Darkness, a giant vast of mouth,
For the slaking of his drouth
Drags from the cloud-branch overhead
Day's one fruit, the rounded, red
Pomegranate people call the sun.
Through his hands red juices run
As he breaks it on the far
Sharp horizon's scimitar.

Then, his cheeks and mouth and beard
With the ruddy liquor smeared,
Loudly laughing at his joke
That has robbed the human folk
Of the fruit that fills their needs,
Flings he the pomegranate seeds
Far across the fields of night.

Lo! a myriad buds of light
Break in silver shoots of hope
That along the morning slope
Scarlet-skirted blooms will run
Leading the pomegranate sun.

NIGHT

“Alms for the poor,” Night thinly whined,
Holding to Day his begging-bowl.
His dark rags trembled in the wind.
Day felt soft pity in his soul;
And in his bag, of cloud-thread spun,
Searched with compassionate hands of light,
And dropped his golden coin—the sun—
Into the begging-bowl of Night.
Night laughed, and wagged his miser head;
And on the floor of darkness poured
His day-hid wealth of stars, and said:
“Now comes to grace my silver hoard
That foolish pilgrim’s golden gift.”
He turned—and lo! the coin was gone,
And through a far-off cloudy rift
Came the slow subtle smile of Dawn.

SUNRISE

Father! from distant lands of night
I come, Thy wandering child.
With Thee, at Thy first kiss of light,
My heart is reconciled;
And, for my bankrupt spirit’s need,
Thy love’s warm fingers run,
Spreading the sky’s rich title-deed
Sealed with Thy seal—the sun.

FOREST MEDITATION

Through a fragrant forest nook
Garrulously goes a brook
Bright through boulders, on and on,
Even as Alfred Tennyson
Sang of Philip's brook that ran
Through the brain and heart of man
In the age Victorian.
Aye, so well his song sang he,
Little song he left for me.
Yet, while he his music spent
Where the brooklet babbling went,
My kingfisher-fancy wings
Back to shadow-haunted springs,
Questing for the mystery
Voluble in brook and tree,
Mixed through bird and beast and me.
For, I feel, one Breath profound
Wakes these trumpet-boughs to sound;
And a shadowy Runner goes
With the brooklet as it flows;
And these breaking bubbles shine
On invisible sweet wine
That a phantom beaker dips
While upstraining phantom lips
Taste intoxication rife
In the heady draught of Life,

As the minstrel brooklet sings
Snatches from the theme of things.

THE BROOK SINGS

“ Ah! those singing moods that flit,
Finite through the infinite,
Not alone fulfilment find
In response of kind to kind;
In love’s call from nested wing
And the instant answering,
Or the mingling human look
Striking through my shaded nook
Sudden sunshine of the soul:—
Lo! that lichen-ermined bole
Lifts its air of kingly birth
Out of humbleness of earth,
Rising proudly to the proud
Pageantry of regal cloud
That shall stoop to feed poor folk
And the oxen in the yoke.

“ Hark shrewd Nature’s paradox
In a windy whimsy rocks
All my forest choristers
To a rhythmic joy that blurs
Wayward will and selfward choice
As a single sylvan voice,

One though multitudinous,
Crying: 'Come! O come to us,
Ye who yearn for quiet bliss!
In our tree-metropolis,
Wrapped in sleepy shadow, find,
For the crowded heart and mind,
And for baffled will and mood,
Sanctifying solitude!'

"Yea, a phantom Harper flings
Joy from catastrophic strings;
Turns to songful interlude
Earth's and man's vicissitude;
And melodious minstrelsy
Draweth from the dumb, as I
From old Earth's disastrous dip
Borrow my musicianship,
Ringing out my golden tone
On the stillness of the stone.

"Lo! my radiant moments glow
Only in my seaward flow
To the sagest of my strains:
'Substance goes, but song remains.
Weighted not by staff and purse,
Past accumulation's curse,
All our vagrant singing throng
On our passing build our song;

And our tuneful fancies fly
Winged with cosmic sympathy;
Claiming kindred with the brief
Glory of the falling leaf;
Aching with the sod that aches
As the green-lance lily breaks
Earth to moon-white wondering
At the summons of the spring
In drum-beat and bugle-strain
As the charging wind and rain
Spend themselves in wild pursuit
Of the Secret's flying foot."

Thus the brook: and as it sings
Snatches from the theme of things,
Meaning mounts from hidden springs,
Bearing towards a hidden sea
Fragments of the mystery
Mixed in man and brook and tree.
Aye, and deeper far than these
Chanting waters, listening trees,
Goeth vision's tempered glance
To the roots of circumstance,
Laying primal meanings bare
To the wash of sun and air,
Till, in Nature's cleansing gaze,
Our high consequential days
Lay their trumps and plumage down,

Vassals to a star-set crown
On a Brow whose purpose glows
Sisterly in clay and rose.
Lo! our solid splendours seem
Shreds of archetypal dream;
And our hued and vibrant art
Pulsings of a heavenly Heart
In whose depths the meanings lurk
Of our earthly handiwork.
Yea, beyond the will that stirs
Hands of earth's artificers
Burns the infinite Desire,
Of our flame the parent Fire,
Edging with a shining hem
All the labouring joy of them
Who through fragile veilings see
Sanctions of Eternity,
And whose lightest fancies dance
To divine significance.

Ah! but what at last avail
Searchings deeper than the tale,
Since our utmost questings come
Where the Wheel at midst is dumb,
And the shadowy Lips proclaim—
Whence and whither are the same,
Silent Source and silent Fall?
Ours the articulate interval

Here between the First and Last,
Where our singing-time is cast
With Creation's interplay
In the dance of Night and Day;
Where at noon the insect-swarm
Passes in a music-storm;
Where the joy-drunk sun-shower weaves
Moonstone garlands in the leaves;
And the moon in rhythmic lines
Green through leafy greenness shines,
As the peasant, out of sight,
Sings him home before the night,
Heart and brain at happy ease
From the ancient mysteries
Chanted sagely by a brook
In a fragrant forest nook.

The Nilgiris, South India.

THE FIRST WIND

There was vast quiet at the first of things.
Not yet had come the ministry of wings
Seed-spreading, pollen-bearing to and fro.
No voiceless tree could her dumb brother know;
For not as yet was born that Power whose spell
Could bridge the sundering vastness of an ell,
And give the touch to mingle each with each,
And wake the mystery of mutual speech.
In that first motionless and lonely calm
Tree-talk was emptied in a vague "I am,"
That, and no more, as joylessly they stood,
A silent, unacquainted multitude,
Separate, unfulfilled. . . . Ah! who could say,
Before was born the linking finger-play,
What music hid within the straight-strung harp?
Stretch to the skies your aspiration's warp,
It shall avail you nothing for a mesh
To snare the beautiful in soul or flesh,
Or dress your starkness, till to right and left
Goes the warm thread of love's close-linking west
Bringing to light the hidden fair design,
Divinely human, humanly divine.

So stood the trees in that primeval trance.
No zephyr gave the lilt for leafy dance,
Or set the tune to shake the moony night
To glittering ecstasies of leaf and light.

Only great solitude was round their feet.
Yet through their veins crept up a quiet heat
Slowly from Life's insatiable fire,
And woke them to a wondering desire
That grew to thirsting lips and groping hands
For something more than any understands,
Some dim vast fellowship whose touch could stanch
The hunger aching forth from bole and branch.

At last that urgent agony of need
In buried rootlet and frustrated seed
Moved from aeonian sleep the Powers of air.
At their first breath each leaf grew whisperer;
And through the trees deep agitations went
As from His hand the unseen Weaver sent
The first full shuttle of the level wind.
Then came great stirring. Head by head inclined
So low that each a neighbourly shoulder felt,
And thrilled to what that revelation spelt
Of beauty breaking in a wild surmise
To mingling courtesies of hands and eyes,
And life let loose to spend for its increase,
And the rich ultimate and brimful peace.

Unto a revelling song the forest swayed,
And fingering leaves with leafy fingers played,
Smarting with joy that thrilled them overmuch
In that first quivering ecstasy of touch;
Joy that sighed down until the blissful trees
Purred to the silken handstroke of the breeze,

And sheltering creatures waxed exceeding kind
Moved by the magic of love's gentle wind.

THE SECRET

A hundred twilights they had flown
From fields unknown,
Grey birds whose resting grey grows virgin white
In ecstasy of flight.

A hundred twilights they had stayed their prows
On wavy boughs

Of greenly breaking casuarina seas.

Oh! in what mysteries

Of scented colour on the deep of air

A hundred twilights they had set them fair,

After a folded moment's rhythmic space,

For some close-nested place,

Some silent, far apart,

Hushed harbour of the heart!

Strange was it that my heart had never cast
At the grey birds that came, and paused, and passed,
An arrowy question; never, till the stress,
This twilight hour, of spirit loneliness
Drew from me *Whence?* and *Whither?* the ancient cry
Of all things born to die,
All valley things unwinged to overleap
The encircling hills of birth and death and sleep.
Yet with the question came the answering word;

For in my being's branches stirred
My spirit's nested bird,
And bore me up in sisterly delight
With all things dowered with flight,
Who rise into the secret of the skies,
And read Earth's face with understanding eyes.

Nay! ask me not to tell
That twilight vision. Ask not me who fell
From that all-comprehending altitude
Through shape on shape more dark and rude,
Till once again
I wallowed in the pen
Of days and deeds, of merchandise and men.
Light unto light alone may answer make.
The hand may take
Only the measure of its emptiness.
Wherefore within the stress
Of life's most dear, most dark futilities,
I have no ease,
Being burdened with the answer to the cry,
The riddling, bitter *Whither?* *Whence?* and *Why?*
Of all things born to die.

Yet what in vision saw I starry clear
I cannot speak, they cannot hear;
For what upon the wing befell
Winged unto wingless may not tell;
And secrets high and wise and old
Only with equals may be told.

OFFERTORY, HINDU MANNER

Very straight, but very thin,
Bare of foot and dark of skin,
On her head a cloth-wrapped load,
Down the dusty Adyar road
Stately a coolie woman
Briskly stepped—to any true man
Giving challenge like a sabre
For her labour
Borne so queenly up,
Though for her life's cup
Held, one saw, few drops of leisure,
And her household measure
Brimmed, as one could see,
Most with poverty.
Yet, though tight her mouth was drawn,
Something shone
In her eyes,
Distant, wing-borne seraph-wise,
Holding mine.

To a little wayside shrine,
Where a flame in darkness burned,
The woman turned;
Laid her load
On the dusty Adyar road;
From her thin and old

Russet sari's fold
Gathered in a trice
Jasmine flowers and rice;
Just a handful—just
That—and heavenly trust
Lifting these, thought I,
More than millions high.

To the shrine the woman bowed,
Deeply, strangely proud,
Not as one who cowers;
Spread her rice and jasmine flowers
On the threshold of the shrine
Where the symbolled Power divine,
Less beheld than felt,
Dimly dwelt.
Then, with close-shut eyes,
Rigid, straight, palmyra-wise,
Stood she, very calm,
Empty-handed, palm to palm
At her naked breast
Closely pressed;
Gave her head a forward tilt;
From it spilt
Over its devoted brim
Every thought but thought of Him;
Silent stood, alive, though dead.

And God said:
I accept your offering,
Sister! not the offered thing;
Not the rice and jasmine flowers.
These my image-making Powers
Shaped and coloured from my stuff
Mild or tough
As my thought desired;
Beat and fired
In the furnace of my heart.
These are part
Of myself.
Who can gather pelf
Out of offers
Filched from his own coffers?
Yet, beyond the offered thing,
I accept your offering;
Not—for bliss your proffered price—
Jasmine flowers and rice,
Though, for life's fair nourishment
And for beauty sweetly spent,
These be good.
I accept your attitude.
I, who only live
While I give,
See in it a sign
Mirroring mine;
Warranty of sure persistence

Of existence
Set on law,
Simple, without flaw:
‘ That which only takes,
Swell and breaks.
Only that which gives,
Truly lives.’ ”

The woman wakened from her trance;
Gave a glance
Up and down the Adyar road;
Lifted to her head her load;
Fresh as dew-washed day
Went her way,
Bearing in her heart a bliss
Drawn from deeper life than this.

BEFORE RAIN

All day a heart pulsed in the brooding sky.
All day a brain beat out a thought.
And heart and brain in single purpose wrought
So sharp an agony,
That one whom life had taught
To read sky-portents with unclouded sight,
Knew that, ere fall of night,
Someone in heaven or on the earth must cry.

All that, towards which, through eyes that searched
and burned,
A thousand thousand days aspired;
All that long sleepless nights had long desired;
All guerdon sought or scorned;
All that was vision-fired
By holy things most passionately hoped
When dream-doors shut or opened,
Mixed now, and moved, and to heart-breaking
yearned.

Now on the earth a burden trails along.
All things are silent that should speak.
The very parrots pass without a shriek.
The rooks in conclave throng.
The mina's tail hangs meek.
A dumb drooped tree its waiting shadow shakes
Over a heart that aches
For birth into its heritage of song.

At last! at last! to those made weather-wise
Flashes the sign that all fulfils.
Hark! the old lion, thunder, through the hills
Growls with swift glaring eyes.
Now! past our palsied wills,
Flame, with its lancing pennants, thrilling drums,
Unto deliverance comes
With a great shout of birth that shakes the skies!

Then comes the rain!—a drop; a coin as wage
For waiting: then the deepening shower.
Earth is scrawled o'er with flowing songs an hour.
O heart! be thou a page
Vocal with so great power!
So shall we, with a word's victorious helm,
Emancipate a realm,
And in a line immortalise an age!

Mysore.

SONG AFTER RAIN

Oh! love has fallen as a shower;
And out of hidden nurseries
In breaking buds and swinging trees,
At call of that forth-bidding power,
From secret cradles under leaves,
And under cool palmyra eaves,
Life casts her chrysalis, and springs
To dance where dancing sunlight goes,
And turn the heart's flower-bordered rows
From prim acceptance of repose
To moth-made revelry of wings!

Oh! love has fallen as a shower;
And through the palpitating blue
The shrieking circling swallow-crew
Build up a high invisible tower

With madcap magic of design
Sketched in grey-lightning curve and line;
Then break, and cry in mimic woe
For very access of delight,
And fill the eye with chase and flight
Of swirling leaves bewildered quite
When the great winds contrarious blow!

Oh! love has fallen as a shower;
And the hibiscus of the heart,
That bled within the bud apart,
Unfolds its hanging scarlet flower;
And all its fervent hope distils
Into a crystal drop that thrills
With urgent bliss upon its tongue.
Heart-full of rainbow speech it aches;
In joy of near fulfilment shakes,
And on the verge of utterance breaks
In one great tear for song unsung!

MIMOSA FLOWERS

I blamed my days
that had not hours
enough
for my demands.
. . . God slowly shaped
mimosa flowers
of fluff
with patient hands.

GLADIOLUS

in an Oriental garden

In my garden sauntering solus
Came I on a gladiolus;
But before I bent my knee
Something strange occurred to me!

What had been a flower now glowed a
Crimson-lanterned peaked pagoda,
Sacred to the More-than-man
In the islands of Japan.

On my garden fell the mood a
Painter puts about a Buddha:
Inward sight where sorrows cease;
Power at poise with radiant peace.

In my garden knelt I solus
At the shrine of gladiolus,
Lit to pleasure more than sight
By, and for, the Lord of Light!

*Dai-Butsu, Japanese for the Buddha, trans.—More-than-man.
Buddha is “The Enlightened One.”*

INSTALLATION ODE

for the first Woman Magistrate in India

What is this sight not seen before?
This perfume to this precinct rare?
Rose-petals on a penal floor!
A scent of roses in the air!
Law's age-long sternness moved to mirth!
A strange new hope in eyes of fear!
A sense of something come to birth
In unseen realms drawn gently near!

Oh! rises now the Woman's Day
The seeress in vision saw,
Symbolled in simple hands that lay
Rose-garlands on the neck of Law;
And—deeper than those hands intend—
Proclaim a dream to fullness grown:
“ Justice her blinding band shall rend
When comes the Mother to her own.”

Lo! She has come! And unto her
Goes the great hope of heart and mind.
Life's giver turns life's arbiter;
A woman, but no longer blind.
She shall cast out old rigour scrolled,
False medicine for souls that ail;
And, wise in lore of life, shall hold
In stabler grasp a juster scale.

She shall smoothe out with healing hand
The twisted purpose of offence.
No sword her sentence will demand
Where love awakens penitence.
Keener than punitory blade
Her eye shall touch transgression's core;
And at that inner accolade
Sin shall rise up and sin no more!

Saidapet Courthouse, Madras, February, 1923.

The magistrate was the author's wife.

The seeress was Anna Bonus Kingsford.

Justice is personified as a woman, blindfold, holding scales.

ARCHERY

A wily archer is the rain
Stalking shy beauty on a lake.
No arrows fail his mark to gain.
They, where they strike, their centre make,
And thence, with ever widening marge,
Spread his inevitable targe.

And next in archer-craft, I think,
Is love, the glimmer of whose dart
Feints at the eyes until they blink,
But pins you squarely in the heart,
And, circling thence, his way expands
To hastening feet and yearning hands.

THE POET TO HIS YOUTH

No, youth! we have no need to part,
Although the years pile up behind.
Rather, we swear to keep a heart
Responsive, and resilient mind.

For this I bound you close to truth;
Smiled at your hungers and your rage,
Knowing that sober age-in-youth
Would round to happy youth-in-age.

Time can no disenchantment bring
To those whose vision passes time;
But yield more vast adventuring
In deeper ocean, richer clime;

And, for the blood's lost gusty whims,
Give steadier sight of loftier goal;
And, for the fever of the limbs,
The strong clear passion of the soul.

SAADI'S GARDEN

Saadi has sung his Garden of the Rose.
Time (Philistine!) on Saadi and Rose has flung
Its dust. Yet from the heap a wild flower grows—
The song by Saadi sung.

THE THEME

I sing of waters, winds and trees.—
But no! I do not sing of these.
One theme alone my Daemon sings:—
The Spirit mixed in mortal things.
She sings no passing wind or tree:
She sings their haunting mystery.

She sings a fruiting branch that swings
To rhythmic wafts of soundless wings;
A fadeless tree, an edgeless wind,
In the deep forest of the mind,
Through which perpetual sunrise flings
A glory over common things.

Yet deeper, farther comes the bruit
Of joy from life's ancestral root,
From which a gust of music brings
Hints of celestial happenings.
Oh! hangs all this from boughs that rise
On the dim peaks of Paradise.

Let pass the loud branch-bearing throng
That lifts a boastful wind of song
Praising man's proud adventurings!
A Spirit-song my Daemon sings:
For humblest things of Heavenly birth
Are better than the best of Earth.

METAMORPHOSES

I

If those shape-changings yet may be
That Ovid and his kindred sing,
Let me be turned into a tree,
Earth-rooted, yet with heart to spring
So heavenly high that, when the glades
Hold it as truth that all is night,
I may assert above their shades
The flouted legend of the light.

And when the dark is dark indeed,
And jungle voices round me jar,
I with such scrutiny would read
The promise of a single star
That instantly my nesting tongues
May carol news of darkness gone,
When slowly down my thrilling rungs
Descend the golden feet of dawn.

Adyar, India.

II

If those shape-changings may be still
That Ovid and his kindred sang,
Make me into a distant hill
Where secret-symbolled curtains hang

So thick that mortals travel-proud
In vain my sky-tranced summit seek,
But judge by its enfolding cloud
The hidden stature of the peak.

And when my call through heaven moves
The laden horses of the rains,
And down my ways their silver hooves
Clatter with gladness to the plains;
What matter if the well-wheel's stress
Forget me on the thanking drums,
Nor dream from what high loneliness
The lowland folk's refreshment comes.

Nilgiris, India.

III

If those shape-changings still have power
That Ovid sang of long ago,
I would be turned into a flower
And in a quiet garden grow:
Not some familiar blossom sweet,
But, mixed of every scent and hue,
Bending before His passing feet
A bloom the Gardener never knew.

There let winged creatures, to and fro
Flying, my honey take and live;

My uttermost reward to know
The joy of those who freely give.
And when my season has been knelled,
May I beyond the date of me,
Be by one flowerlike spirit held
A fair and fragrant memory.

Wicklow, Ireland

IV

If those shape-changings yet are made
That Ovid sang in days gone by,
Take me, and in a flowery glade
Turn me into a butterfly.
There let me, all the sunny days,
A shuttle flickering right and left,
Through the hued warp that Eros lays
Weave the white thread of Psyche's weft.

Let beauty still with beauty wed,
While I, who sanctify the rite,
Shepherd through seasons far ahead
The generations of delight.
Though from their joy I move apart,
Our dreams shall fill with ancient things;
I find their honey in my heart,
And they my troubling touch of wings.

Dublin Mountains, Ireland.

V

If those shape-changings men still know
That Ovid sang, Oh! I would rise
And turn into a cloud of snow,
And, to the pipe of windy skies,
In a celestial passion sweep
In frantic dances, happy feuds,
And at my joy's end whitely sleep
In still Himālayan solitudes.

Let springtime slay me where I lie:
My shed life tree and flower renews.
Oh! I shall beautifully die
Into a myriad scents and hues.
I shall pass on through death to birth,
Happy that I with lips of white,
Wakened the warm desire of earth
With the cool kiss of heaven's delight.

Srinagar, Kashmir, India.

LOVE'S IMMORTALITY

I

If I could think one life must quite suffice
The love-rich heart for perfect thanksgiving,
I would cry out against so poor a thing
As the slow coming on of age's ice;
Aye, against fate would find a deep device
To spread new skies for love's love-curious wing,
And with strange murmurs of an earthly spring
Trouble the autumn peace of Paradise!

Oh! never has the heart, that loved indeed,
Counted its golden memory's hoarded glow
Better than laughter of love's squandered pence!
Love has another and a nobler creed:
To count love's river sweetest in its flow,
And life's most happy boon its passing hence!

II

So, when you die; and all the world you filled
Crumbles at length to silent nothingness,
Having no mouth for speech, no hands to bless!
After some space, when the jarred heart is stilled,
I shall awake one morning spirit-thrilled
By you, well-knowing still your strong caress;

And at your call shall slip my spirit's jess
To wing life's twilight towards you fiery-willed!
Oh! I shall laugh, and call the calendar
Time's Ananias! I shall twist the earth
Back through the hours between my finger and thumb;
Outwit frustrating flesh; hold age's scar
A jesting presage of my proper birth
When our souls cry: "I have come!" "O love! you
have come!"

III

For I have loved you as no mortal man
Ever loved mortal woman. I have seen
Your very flesh so shot with heavenly sheen
That, exiled from you by my sex's span,
I have cried out to heaven to lift the ban,
Or give new life, to be what you have been;
To call you lord as now I call you queen,
Till fuller knowledge love more perfect plan!

And after that? Oh! we two dare not rest
On heights below the highest. Calm or storm,
Life beyond life, towards love's exalted goal
We must press on, till our insatiate zest
Quash the redundancy of form and form,
And Love's own self marry us soul to soul!

TO IRELAND

Before the Treaty of December, 1921

Not the loud songs of joyful ease
I give, as once on morning's wing;
But, for your night of agonies,
I give dark songs I cannot sing.

Take them, beloved! and, deeper far
Than moods that wear a transient name,
Take love whose wordless poems are
The throbbing silence round a flame;

Love that my veins with passion thrids,
Kindling your candles in my eyes,
And from my heart's red censer bids
Perpetual worship rise.

IRELAND AFTER TEN YEARS

Land of my birth! again I greet
Thy grey-wing sky, green earth, sweet air;
And, passing hence, lay at thy feet
The tribute of a simple prayer,

That, since thy long red saga's wave
Beyond thy dream's edge sinks from view,
Thy children, one in heart, may brave
The splendid hazard of the New;

Yet, for the spirit's deeper thirst,
From ancient, wise, enchanted springs
Drink, that thy Last be as thy First—
A glory sought by saints and kings.

Rosse, Sligo, July, 1925.

LITANY

Have mercy, Lord! on the mad multitude
Who smear Love's holy name with fleshly lust,
Who trade men's bodies and souls for gilded dust,
And quench a creature's life for needless food:
Mercy on trivial thought, on language lewd,
On star-made souls who choose the moth and rust,
And on stiff-tegumented men who must
Slay and be slain to hit the hero mood.

But mercy most because their mouths blaspheme
With dissonance Thy symphony of Names,
Breaking with bigotry their deep accord,

Leading through life the error-poisoned stream
That fructifies our myriad woes and shames.
For this, man's sin of sins, have mercy, Lord!

LIFE

I am in love with life! This very hand
Has stroked a foot carved by Praxiteles.
Oh! I have swum on circling music-seas
Under the dome Angelo greatly planned;
At Leonardo's Supper ta'en my stand;
Before the Dark Madonna bent my knees;
Have thrilled to Delville's lofty mysteries,
And swayed to Toscanini's magic wand!

O shining spirits lifting Beauty's light
Against the new black threat of battle's drum!
Your coming day shall drown the dark of strife!
One star denies the regnance of the night:
Many are ye, and more are yet to come.
I too shall come: I am in love with life!

Europe, 1925.

Michelangelo planned the dome of St. Peter's, Rome. Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" in Milan. The Dark Madonna in a side chapel in St. Mark's, Venice. Jean Deville's murals on the progress of justice in the Law Courts, Brussels. Toscanini in La Scala Theatre, Milan.

GRAVEN IMAGES

A hundred years ere Christ was born,
A carven faun upon a floor
In Pompeii danced night and morn,
Till burst the mad Vesuvian roar,
And fiends of flame out-danced him quite,
And shut him in millennial night.

At Herculaneum, on a rock,
Swift Mercury from flight repos'd
A moment. But the fiery shock
His heavenly commission closed—
Unless a graven God may go
Scathless through ash and lava-flow.

And scathless came they, God and faun,
And cheered the diggers' gloating eyes
When eighteen centuries had gone
And more, and to the ancient skies
The faun still wafted hand and foot
Unto an undiscovered lute;

And on his rock, poised zephyr-light,
His heel-wings visibly astir
With zest of yet unfinished flight,
Sat the celestial messenger;
A silent sign of beauty's sum
Still housed in Herculaneum.

To those at rest, to those afoot
Vesuvius spake the self-same word,—
And dream and deed were levelled mute.
Men's eyes a bitter moment blurred
Before, in mercy, out of flame
Silence and utter darkness came . . .

Time passed . . . and Rome . . . The delver
rings
The bell of joy's discovery;
Scarce heeds the huddled human things,
But to an icon bends the knee;—
So low in worth God's image stands;
So high—the labour of his hands!

God made the savage and the sage,
Fashioned the fool, and lit the wise.
But worth lies not in lineage.
Only through rising deeds we rise
Godwards, when we, with hearts elate,
Gods, or in moods of Gods, create.

Not in the blood-beat swift and warm
Shall man life's purpose all fulfil;
Nor weight the spirit with the form
If he would top his utmost hill,
And greet the Masters of the Flame,
And know the Splendour whence he came.

Through jungle-glooms and floes that blind,
He sought a sure ascensive way;
Haply did Art's allurement find,
And at the end of striving day
Touched the dim ladder-foot of dream,
Its rungs with angel-forms agleam.

From dissonant life's untutored noise
He learned to feather music's wing;
Bid arch and spire in equipoise
From shape and stuff anarchic spring;
And conjure out of passion's rage
The ordered traffic of the stage.

By these, through wavering *Where?* and
Whence?

He reached a coign of spirit-rest;
Through chaos glimpsed Intelligence
No darker than himself possessed;
And starred the margin of his night
With names of everlasting light.

Equal in Turner's golden gleam
And Wagner's heaven-ascending shout,
In Benvenuto's jewelled dream
And gates Ghiberti hammered out,
In Shakespeare's hoard of human lore
And spirit-singing of Tagore,

Art seeks, in script that shall endure,
To write across the page of death
Beauty's immortal signature.
This well accomplished, vision saith,
Body with soul shall sweetly walk,
And God and man hold friendly talk.

It glances from the ritual foot
Of Nataraja's grave eclat.
It signals deeply through the mute
Trance-blinded Chandrasekhara,
In lands where myriads bend their knees
To honour graven images.

Now, to the sound of Indian drums
In praise of Gods they never knew,
One waits a start that never comes,
One finds not labour's restful due,
As on my table God and faun
Drowse and dance on, and on, and on.

In Hindu tradition, Nataraja is the Lord of the Cosmic Dance ; Chandrasekhara is the embodiment of repose. Both are aspects of one Deity, Shiva.

ODE AT SEA IN STORM

In faith I lay me down,
Though the clouds frown
Beyond the iron screen
That thinly throbs the sea and me between;
And herded waves rush by in mad stampede
Goaded by some tremendous need,
Horning my habitation of the night
With hissing spite,
And in their own foamed venom drown.

In faith I lay me down,
Though I am bound and blinded in the net
Of storm's incalculable threat;
For there is standing at my being's gate
The inexorable Angel of my Fate,
Appointed ere the winds and waves were spun
By cosmic fingers on their giddy run
About the world, or lightning flung its lance
In glittering arrogance,
Or pompous thunderings
Shook out their brazen wings,
Mock heraldry on day's bedraggled crown.

In faith I lay me down;
For He has power
(If such my fate) to stem the threatening hour;

To bid the madcap waters roll
No wave within the cipher of His scroll,
But halt their overwhelming slope
Beyond the circle of my horoscope.
His lifted hand can fend the blackest frown.
In faith I lay me down.

In faith I close mine eyes
Beyond the day's wild, wandering surmise,
Certain that I shall wake
Here, or here-else where no mad waters break:
What matter where,
Since I shall find the Eternal Lover there
As I have found Him here
In one true heart this many a lovelit year,
And heard His music, made by fingers warm
That shall outplay the orchestra of storm!
Godwards our climbings go, the peak though dim:
Shall not our sinkings gravitate to Him?
In faith I close mine eyes.

Falls the ripe fruit that other fruit may rise.
Night the rich profit hath
Of day's ingathered aftermath.
Lo! in each wave's importunate hollowed palm
The dark sweet wine of inner calm
Mysteriously mine Angel now doth press
From all my stormy windfalls. In the stress

Of death's dire threat life's fool now waxeth wise.
In faith I close mine eyes.

Sunlight and shade their mutual purpose find.
Our living is with dying intertwined.
Yea, have I not, with each outgoing breath,
Rehearsed the final trick of death
That is but sleep made permanent?
What if the body shirk its last event
This catastrophic night
Or in some distant moment hushed and white?—
My petrel spirit, shaken from the nest
Of my imprisoning breast,
Sovereign shall tread all waves that fall and rise.
In faith I close mine eyes.

In the sea's frenzied game of pitch-and-toss
I cannot suffer loss.
Rather from life's last threshings I shall gain
The harvest of mine own essential grain
Under tonight's or no night's thundering skies.
In faith I close mine eyes . . .

Bay of Biscay, August, 1925.

SONG BY SILENUS

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND, SHELLEY, ACT II, SCENE ii

Sang Silenus in a wood:

Once the Chief of Gods above
Scattered, out of plenitude,
Wine of His creative love.
One who caught it in the cup
Of his body drank it up;
Wept and fretted, laughed and fired;
Stalked the thing that he desired;
Sated, stretched him in a grove;
Snored him back to thirsty mood.

God, who watched him, quiet-eyed,
Turned His face away, and sighed;
Almost His love's largesse rued.

One a seething ichor caught
In the chalice of his heart,
And its impulse hotly wrought
Into sacred joy and smart;
Architectured, sculptured, limned;
Genuflected, grovelled, hymned;

Visited with holy wrath
Climbers by another path;
Packed the whole within the part;
Strangled thus the thing he sought.
God, who drooped a watching eye,
Murmured gently: "By and by,
When his strivings come to nought."

One a crystal vintage quaffed
From the goblet of his brain;
Quenched his fire; and murder-craft
Bent to compass knowledge-gain;
Straightened to a rigid line
All the pulsing sphere divine;
Shed the life to seize the law;
Worshipped only what he saw;
Chewed the husk, and cast the grain;
At the poet's passion laughed.
Said the Chief God: "Agonies
Shall his way to wisdom ease
With their fiery-pointed shaft."

One in solemn rapture stood,
Drunken with untasted wine;
Body, heart and brain subdued
Till their powers, made perfect, shine
With a white creative fire
Lit by infinite desire

That a new-made heaven and earth,
Built in beauty, brings to birth,
Housing man become divine.

Nodded God, and whispered: "Good!"
But His eyes appeared to be
Only filled with prophecy:
Sang Silenus in a wood.

THE COMPLETE LOVER

I

Read my confession here unfurled:
I am the lover of the world.
All things that cross my senses' verge
I seize, and in my being merge.

I am the sire of ventures bold;
Have mothered blessings manifold,
And strewed my love upon the wind
To feed love-lacking human-kind.

When Phidias carved a marble tress,
It was to wait my hand's caress;
And Giotto raised his tower sublime
For my devoted feet to climb.

Shelley in Rome dishearted slept
Till on his tomb my heart was wept.
Scriabine music made from fire
To feed the flame of my desire.

Let Beauty smile by sea or land,
There you will find my plighting hand.
What various transports move my will,
She counts my love unchanging still.

However blows its moody wind,
All marriage mirth is to her mind;
For whatsoe'er my ardour stirs,
All worship in the end is hers.

So I espoused the sun and moon,
And married every wild bird's rune;
Have clasped the dancing April gust,
And laid my breast against the dust.

When lonely flowers to hunger wake,
I the beloved completion make.
I have enfolded weeping skies,
And charmed the tiger's roving eyes.

Where leafy vows are softly sighed,
I am the dear enraptured bride;
And I the bridegroom proud who goes
To share the nuptials of the rose.

Yet though with these, for Beauty's sake,
The ceremonial vow I take,
I have a secret none may share:
I am the great philanderer!

Whatever lips my warm lips pressed,
I had a deeper, farther quest,
With something esoteric hid
Beneath my sidelong drooping lid.

Whatever joys divert the day,
Night gives my wing the homeward way
To where, beyond a hidden gate,
I hold my heart inviolate.

There, in a garden paradised,
I keep the Soul's eternal tryst.
She hangs her silence as a screen.
She waits me, felt, but, ah! unseen.

She will not mix with mine her name
Till I can burn as crystal flame;
With God and Life and Her made one,
Espoused of all, and bound to none.

III

Life's loves with little passions play
In satisfactions of a day.
Love that from life's dim first doth wend
Finds its fulfilment in the end.

So count I craft of hand and lip
But tools of my apprenticeship;
Plummet and compass, gauge and chart
To perfect love's perfected art.

To no less heavenly conquest She
Yieldeth her white virginity.
Yea, though I woo in countless ways,
Still She eludes my longing gaze.

Only God's eye in secret sees
Her veiled celestial sanctities,
Till I, grown Godlike, claim my prize—
And perish in Her burning eyes!

ABOVE THE RAINBOW

I stand on a Himâlayan height
Watching the shower and sunlight march.
Deep in a valley's early night
A rainbow builds its Roman arch.

It lifts upon its spectral lines
A crumbling edifice of gloom.
Above, in heavenly gardens, shines
The eternal snow-flowers' waxen bloom.

O hills where light and darkness meet!
O moment chastening and proud
That puts below my climbing feet
The sign God set upon the cloud!

I take the challenge of the bird
Exulting past the rainbow's rise:
Lightly upon the spirit's word
I leave the earth and seek the skies;

I spread my pinions on the blast,
Casting the cage of date and name,
Above the hint of waters past,
Beyond the threat of future flame.

MORNING WORSHIP .

In front of Kinchinjunga

Something my wakening soul has stirred!
Is it the dawn-sweet sun,
Or songs of a sweet-hearted bird
That through the sweet air run?

These: but some deeper spell is cast!
Look up! See, tipped with rose,
White on the sky's blue lake, the vast
Himâlayan lotus blows!

O perfect Beauty's loftiest mood!
O Peace that shall endure!
O high unsullied Solitude!
O Purity most pure!

Surely to thee Earth's morning prayers
With song and incense rise.
Behold upon thy temple stairs
My lifted hands and eyes,

No less devout, if inner sight
In deeper worship goes
To something higher than your height
And purer than your snows!

1926.

THE BURDEN OF IMMENSITY

I

Bring incense and all instruments of praise
Before the snow-spread altars of the Hills.
Yet, though the soul to solemn worship wills,
Stark sight and sound the sceptic senses daze.
On those colossal steeps no life-print stays;
White death stupendous deeps with silence fills;
While here the earth to awful thunder thrills
Instantly with the lightning-stroke that slays.

Oh! though the brow with eager search be flushed,
It quails at scriptures writ too large to see.
By frigid power my votive hymn is hushed;
My tribute candle gutters uselessly;
And all my purpose is a petal crushed
Beneath the burden of immensity!

II

Wherefore to you I turn to be made strong,
O comprehensible dear transient things!—
Beauty between a butterfly's frail wings,
A dew-edged leaf, the bulbul's golden song.
To you and to all finite things belong
God's touch familiar on our quivering strings

That to the exile soul nostalgia brings,
And dreams that round the heart for utterance throng.

And when in twilight the cicada twangs
His jew's-harp for an hour, Oh! I would sit
Where coils a creeper innocent of fangs,
And worship in an odorous quiet lit
By one ripe star that from the night-branch hangs
Tingling with rumours of the infinite!

Rishitsum, Himâlayas.

SUNRISE ON KINCHINJUNGA

Sweetly at dawn, Oh! high and heavenly sweet,
Sun-lips of thy pure whiteness take love's toll.
Thou from thy shoulders dost the night-wraps roll
The more in beauty morning's grace to greet.
Thou scatterest sleep with ecstasy. I meet
Thy pledgings with my heart's o'er-brimming bowl.
Thou hast called up the mountains in my soul,
And set high hunger throbbing in my feet!

O sky-throned poet! who thy moods may tell?—
A moment vast in majesty; the next
Dwindled to wanness of a sea-bleached shell;
Then, on the scroll of heaven a shining text
Saying, to spirits joyfully perplexed,
How near the static and ecstatic dwell!

TREE-SACRIFICE

“ Lop me that towering tree,” I said,
“ That shuts the snow-peaks from the eye.”
But when his heavenward-lifted head
Went earthward with a groan and sigh,
At that most lamentable sound
I could have cried with sudden guilt,
Seeing that regal thing discrowned,
And know my joy on suffering built.

But Nature said: “ Who mars to make,
Sinless though sinning moves and lives.
They only err who only take.
Who gives, my offered hand forgives.
Take thou on trust my heavenly laws
Writ past the reach of earthly wing.
Get thou and spend in Beauty’s cause,
But leave with me the reckoning.

“ Lo! I who spurred the bramble weed,
And bade the sinuous leopard creep;
Who made the green grasshopper feed,
And on his gnawed snapdragon sleep;
Who fanged the snake and hued the flower,
And taught the river how to run,
Am master of the simple power
To sink a star and raise a sun.

“ My ancient fiat bodied forth
The jackal’s hole, the squirrel’s nest.
My breath embalmed both South and North,
And golden-girdled East and West.
Yon proud wing flashing overhead
Leaves on the ground its home in trust;
And Heaven and Earth are meetly wed
When takes the bird its bath of dust.

“ Who listens well, my flowers will find
No less articulate than birds.
My rock is vocal as the wind.
My silences are secret words.
A myriad shapes, but one in soul,
They come and go in shade and sun.
My Beauty calls throughout the whole,
And all desire of me is one.

“ Who then a fallen bough shall grieve?
In me all separations meet.
Of hill and wood the end shall leave
One equal dust about my feet.
Your tree with many-fingered roots
Close clasps the ground with brother hand;
And through his veins Earth’s ichor shoots
And lifts his bird-enchanting wand.

“For love’s pure purpose bole and branch
With gladness break their veiling ranks.
Their angels will their suffering stanch.
They feel the mountain-spirit’s thanks
Broadcast from happy peaks and slopes
For Beauty-worship’s larger sight,
And sacrifice that sweetly opes
Unreckoned gateways of delight.”

Kalimpong.

ON THE ROAD TO SHIGATZE

From Kalimpong

This is the way the wanderers have trod;
Armed men to seek a snowbird’s hidden nest;
The men who hoped to humble Everest;
The pilgrims on the march to gaze on God;
The slit-eyed, rose-cheeked races, rainbow-shod;
The red-robed lama on the ancient quest,
Scattering something beautiful and blessed
Among the crowd who dig and sing and plod.

I too have gone that road: a little length
After my heart’s far-travelling desire,
Dreaming a Man of men perchance to meet;
To look upon his sweetness mixed with strength;
To bend before his eye’s compassionate fire,
And take the dust of his most quiet feet.

A TIBETAN BANNER

Sent to Nathalia Crane, the young American poetess, from Kalimpong, Lower Himálayas

I

This is a lama's banner, made
In Lhasa, past the palisade
Of peaks where the Himálayan snows
Lie in millennial repose;
Where Death spreads out his winding-sheet
For all but consecrated feet.

It came with mule-back caravan
By slippery track that glibly ran
So intimate with precipice
And neighbourly with sheer abyss,
That he who bore it towards the plains
Left to his mule the useless reins,
And closed his eyes, and clung with hope
To it and to his horoscope,
And calmed his heart with holy song
And dreams of rest at Kalimpong,
Where red-robed brothers, day and night,
Pray, chant and labour towards the Light.

It came when Buddha's birthday moon
Rose like a festival balloon
Above the twilight's incense-haze;
When, at the end of balmy days,
The sun's pulsating ladle spills
Its molten silver on the hills;
And summer, bringing new release
To fountain-heads of warm increase,
All night from icy caverns hears
The drip of tributary tears.

I think the mountains that it passed
Must on this painted scroll have cast
A vast mild look of wondering
That such a small and silent thing
Should hold, as in a folded shell,
The sound of wisdom's ocean-swell
And sea-bird songs that shall out-rhyme
The lips of geologic time.

Its way was cleared by prayer and grace,
Till, in the jostling market-place,
Starred by a ring of almond eyes
Drawn from the lure of merchandise,
The quiet lama took his stand,
And turned his prayer-wheel in his hand,
And from his wise and travelled scroll
Spelt out the secret of the soul,

And mapped the ancient Middle Way
From darkness to the spirit's day.
Not in fine phrases poised and proud
Taught he the simple-hearted crowd,
But carried succour for their need
On the broad back of fancy's steed,
Telling the tale that I rehearse
In unsophisticated verse.

II

A thousand thousand years ago,
On a great mountain tipped with snow,
Born of the giant Earthquake's pains
Between Tibet and India's plains,
Lived Avalokiteswara,
Invisible incognita;
Man-woman grown to God-estate,
Pure, passionless, compassionate;
Set on the sacred lotus-seat
With blessing hands and folded feet;
Dwelling in meditative mood
Upon the verge of Buddhahood.

There no marauding edict ran
To sate the murder-lust of man.
Insect and fish and bird and beast
About that hill from quarrel ceased;

The shimmering cobra cast its fang,
And tree and flower together sang.
So peacefully the tale of days
Was told in duty, prayer and praise,
That hardly could the sages say
If still the seasons went their way.
Softly the nesting of the bird
Signalled that spring again had stirred;
And raggéd moths at close of day
Whispered the winter on its way.

There came a time, our banner says,
When at the end of pilgrim days
A sage of India hither came,
And Lotup-nyng-po was his name.
He loved with searching souls to sit
And read the lore on palm-leaves writ;
He loved through squalid streets to go
With healing herbs for human woe;
He loved the earth, he loved the sky,
But chiefly loved all things that fly.
And birds of water, earth and air
Sang to his heart their deepest care;
For such is love's compelling power,
It wakens pleasure in a flower;
Yea, and love's foot, if all were known,
May stir to joy the trampled stone.

So Lotup-nyng-po inly knew
What need the birds together drew;
What secret hunger strove to speak
In quivering wing and chattering beak;
What impulse moved the feathered clan
To slip beyond the fate of man,
To miss the cage of sense and mind,
And the pure spirit's freedom find.
Wherefore, at worship's holy time
Did Lotup-nyng-po slowly climb
The sacred pathway to the peak,
The hidden Heart of hearts to seek;
With sun-riped fruit and stingless wine
Placate the guardians of the shrine,
And there the birds' petition breathe,
While incense vapours upward wreath
Grey through the smoky camphor-flame
And chantings of the Holy Name.

Then from the peak of virgin snow
There came an answering golden glow
That gathered to a mist of wings
Blessing all bound and hungry things;
For there is neither great nor small
To Love whose heart enfoldeth all:
It shrinks to fill the sand-fly's room;
Grades to the owl the needed gloom;

And in the worm's clay-shuttered ear
Speaks the slow speech that it can hear.

So Avalokiteswara,
Love's perfect-hearted replica,
Swept all of bird-like in His breast
Into the compass of a nest;
Into one magic moment's haste
Crowded the feathered year to taste
The sweet and bitter of the wing
From building-time to scattering,
And learn the pathways to the brain
For entrance of His mystic strain.
Then on the clamorous fluttering storm
He lighted in the cuckoo's form,
And the shrill conclave of the birds
Silenced with wisdom's quiet words.

III

“ O ye whose hearts are moved to pray
For light upon the upward way!
Hark ye! and, hearkening, give heed
Not in the word to find the deed.
Lo! in the space between each breath
Lurks the sure-striking serpent, death;
And all your treasures, packed with pride,
Another scatters far and wide.

“ Live then to die. Get then to spend.
In each beginning find its end.
Thus, to no pain or pleasure thrall,
Your lips may taste the joy of all.
Where many waters troubling meet,
No pilgrim bathes his dusty feet;
But the deep lake that outward flows
Whispers the secret of repose.

“ Search not for truth on dusty shelves,
But in the scriptures of yourselves.
They only towards the quest shall win
Who seek the spirit’s way within.
Would you the peace Nirvanic know,
To your own peace in silence go.
The wandering jackal’s hungry wail
Draws barking dogs upon his trail.

“ Learn you that life’s alluring fruit
Springs from a hidden heavenly root,
The wise ones look with love on all,
But know all fruit at last shall fall.
Who seeks the world, his heart beclouds
In the thick solitude of crowds;
But he who seeks a peak apart
Must hold the world within his heart.

“Blesséd are you who make your care
The turning of the wheel of prayer
For Gods who dwell in heavenly light,
And Gods who seek the shades of night;
For struggling, sorrowing human-kind;
For ghosts that wander as the wind;
For all dumb things that round you dwell,
And the sad company of hell.

“Cease not to turn the praying drum
And chant *Om mani padme hum*;
For they who seek the spirit’s end
Have all creation for their friend.
Yea, deep in all created things
Quivers the skyward lift of wings;
And prayer for hearts that upward groan
Strikes back in blessing on your own.”

So said the cuckoo: and the birds,
In song beyond the wing of words,
Fashioned melodious formulae
To set their hearts’ thanksgiving free;
And on the scutcheon of the sky
Scribbled a mystic heraldry
Tracing, for eyes that truly see,
The ancient line of liberty.

In that ecstatic whirling rout
The sacred cuckoo faded out;
And on the peak a mist of wings,
Blessing all bound and hungry things,
Melted into a golden glow
About the brow of virgin snow.

From that far-hidden Heart has purled
So sweet a blessing on the world,
That climbing souls, from age to age,
Have sought that sacred vicinage;
And find the inner peace they seek
Around that holy, haunted peak,
So high removed from human care
That foothill husbandmen, astir
When the great broom of many dawns
Sweeps from the sky the starry awns,
Reckon its far, dim, snow-fed stream
Some river in the realm of dream,
And think its track from hill to vale
The silver zigzag of a snail.

IV

Thus runs the scroll—or nearly thus:
And what of truth it holds for us

Hangs all on what we hold of truth;
For there is nothing so uncouth
Or so seductive to the sight
But shares the secret of the Light.
Not from life's tree-top sings alone
The ancient song that life has known:
The very dust that stains its bole
Carries the purpose of the whole.

So, when your poet-eyes have fed
On parrot green, pomegranate red,
And you are tired of merry jape
With boar and leopard, bird and ape,
Telling in rude but vivid art
The story of the searching heart,
I think this chant of Tala Hill
Will touch your spirit with the thrill
Of something intimately sweet
That clings about its quiet feet.

But, whether you the scriptures scan
Of man made God or God made man;
Whether those Powers of ancient date
That man has served with love and hate,
Be smoke-made phantoms of the fire
Of his unquenchable desire,

Or whether they be Shapes that pass
Across imagination's glass
From islands of reality
Cast by a beam across that sea
Whose slow erosion on our verge
Shall with its own our being merge;
Still may your spirit's open eye
The mystery of things descry.
Whatever songs your lips indite,
Still may the gleam of inner light
Golden your thrumming finger-tips;
Still your discriminating lips
Taste in tame rose and wild-heart gorse
The heavenly savour of their source.

Their day of vision has begun
Who in the sunflower see the sun.
Life unto them on plain or hill
Holds something sacramental still.
They feel that Presence infinite
Whose hand for searching eyes has writ
Upon the universal scroll
The mutual language of the soul;
Who makes this temple, Night-and-Day,
A hospice on the pilgrim's way;
Who for the footsore sends the showers,
And for sweet incense made the flowers;

Who stands with sanctifying grace
Midmost in life's loud market-place,
And turns our world of sea and land
A murmuring prayer-wheel in His hand.

Parts II and III are condensed from a manuscript in the temple at Kalimpong. The interpretation of the prayer-wheel, which is that of the hill-people themselves, differs from the current outside idea.

SPRING IN KASHMIR

Now, while on the Himâlayan heights,
The flower-like snows in sunshine fade,
Here, in a garden of delights,
A mimic winter-tide is made.

Lo! in an exquisite pretence,
The Indian *may* doth here assume
Snow-shapes, and hold in white suspense
Her lovely avalanche of bloom.

The soaring poplar earthward shakes
Its cotton as the wind's will shifts,
And fills the air with pallid flakes
That gather into snowlike drifts.

The slim acacia's clustered flower
Out of the veins of earth distils,
Through life's reincarnating power,
The dying whiteness on the Hills.

Daisies in white-eyed wonder wake
And spread their simulated snows
Where unseen hands in silence make
The snowballs of the guelder rose;

And where, touched by the season's mood,
Shy things adventurous are made,
And white nun Iris dons her hood
And joins the gentle masquerade.

Oh! in this tryst of joy and peace,
This paradise of sight and sound,
The brooding spirit finds release,
And sees, with vision grown profound,

Nature, in necromantic role—
To break the risk of bartering
Ascetic winter's begging-bowl
For sudden opulence of spring—

Conjure a flower-formed world of snow,
And lay for Life's exploring feet
A gradual path where she may go
In confidence from cold to heat;

And crown Life's brow with a white kiss
To cool the ardour of the day,
Lest she, too quickly finding bliss,
Should lose the happy Middle Way.

THE GOBLET

A gleam of water edged by sculptured hills;
These to the eye; but how the soul expands
Unto the vision of a Power that fills
A goblet raised in vast ecstatic hands!
Here not alone the blue kingfisher dips
For food, or comes for drink the singing boy:
This cup hath known the touch of unseen Lips;
High Gods have shaped it, and high Gods enjoy.
Housed where the water-hen a home has found,
I, borne by Beauty towards my God-estate,
Am drunk with form and colour, scent and sound,
And still of this deep draft insatiate;
For, in the mystery of Beauty's feast,
The more I take, the more is she increased!

The Lake, Srinagar.

BIRDS BEFORE DAWN

No rebel gleam threatens the tyrant Dark.
So perfect and so final is its hush,
Past years may be delusions. Ah! but hark!
That sudden sweet sedition of the thrush!
The golden questions of the oriole
Yellowly touch the darkness one by one,
Till vision slowly fills a slow-made bowl
With blent crescendo of both song and sun.

Is it that song grows out of growing day,
Or day is builded by enlarging song?
Chained to the wheel, who knows the wheel's own
way?

This much will help our shackled feet along:
That all man's songs, wherewith he cheers his night,
Are his rebellious prophecies of light!

Srinagar.

TRANSIENT BEAUTY

What is more beautiful than dew on grass?—
Unless it be a sudden light on leaves,
Or whispering breezes over fallen sheaves,
Or wings that make soft breathings as they pass.
Beauty looks wistfully through broken glass,
And furtively where the dread spider weaves.
There is cold beauty where still death bereaves,
And strange keen beauty in the word Alas!

O Transient Beauty! our lone hearts have learned
(Exiled from light, unreconciled to shade)
From thee, to shed the load our toil has earned,
Our makings wherewith we are all unmade.
Down thy dim paths our feet have homeward yearned,
And through things fading found what cannot fade!

THE SHRINE

For fear you might some time go out,
And never might come home again,
I made a place secure from doubt
Of dreams or deeds, from marts and men;
Close-cheeked to life, yet spirit-far,
A sanctuary of the soul
To hold all memories that are
Worthy to wear an aureole.

There daily do I bow my head
And set within my secret shrine
Your wisdom's life-sustaining bread,
Your laughter's heart-uplifting wine.
And there, from life's illusion free,
And thoughts and moods that ebb and flow,
I celebrate love's mystery,
And your perpetual presence know.

There, too, though life of you went dumb,
I have your music in the air;
Yea, in love's alchemy become
The holy thing I worship there;
And know that when all ways are trod,
We two shall stand, beyond time's rout,
A pillar in the House of God,
Whence we shall never more go out.

PROSPECTION

To Nathalia Crane, American poetess, aged 15

Nothing that we shall see and hear
That hour when we each other greet
Shall break the crystal atmosphere
Where comprehending spirits meet.

Nay, we shall let clear laughter flow
Across vain talk of age and youth,
We who in flaming moments know
The instantaneousness of Truth;

Who watch, from somewhere near the sun,
The Parters of the grain and husk;
And estimate an era done
A firefly's glimmer in the dusk.

Therefore have I your earliest rhyme
Extolled, because it spoke to me,
Through your vernacular of time,
The language of eternity;

And closed a trivial era's toll
With your great gift of glad surmise;
The oldest vision of the soul
Rekindled in the youngest eyes.

Off Cape Guardafui, May, 1928.

PREPARATION

I must get busy, dear ! to stretch my eyes
Toward their full sight, so that, if heaven should mark
You first for entrance, they should cross the dark
And glimpse the glittering crown you wear for prize;
Or, should I first find wing in Paradise,
They, from the sheer perspective of the lark,
Should watch through far old glooms your spirit's spark
Rise towards its orbit in applauding skies.

And I must tune my ears that they may hear,
From this or that side of the soundless dearth
A while between, music remembered well;
Through clangour of Earth an angel-accent near;
Or on my harp an echo of dear Earth—
And which were sweeter sorrow hardly tell.

PADEREWSKI PLAYS

in Lausanne Cathedral

I

On pillars mounting to dark mystery
Some gloomy zealot of a silent God
Inscribes: "It is forbidden to applaud."
We wait like forest spirits robbed of glee,
Till, look! each pillar turns into a tree
Swayed by a wind that laughs at rule and rod,

Because of magic rising from the sod,
And old Silenus talking gloriously!

He talks through Schumann's beauty, Chopin's tears,
Beethoven's quiet and the storm of Liszt,
Through Schubert's longing; talks us up to spheres
Where our rapt brows by Presences are kissed,—
And gloomy silence whirls away in fright
On the loud torrent of the heart's delight!

II

Master! and freeman of the world's free lands!
You, with no gesture of a hand that deigns,
Suffering with Chopin for a land in chains,
Laid by your art at Freedom's rough demands.
Now, though your hair no aureole expands
Of russet flame, the inner fire remains;
But man's long sorrow sweetens now your strains,
And his sure triumph thunders from your hands.

Who says the snow has fallen on your head?
Nay! you have mounted to the soul's pure snow
With eyes unflinching and unwavering tread,
By paths which only Alpine spirits know,
Whose end is on the white accomplished peak
Where the immortals with immortals speak!

1928.

THE CITY OF HOPE

Geneva

Fresh snow on peaks through balmy air descried,
And sunlight flashing from green flowing jade,
Have, though the leaves thin winterward, remade
Summer by autumn cooled and purified.
Swan, gull and waterhen have hither hied,
Assured, like all thy fugitives, of shade,
Near where strong men, through suffering, have
essayed
To seek the peace that blooms from buried pride.

City of Man's great hope! I too have knelt
Unto a dream that here my spirit drew;
Not the dark fever Byron wildly felt,
But that bright vision thou and Shelley knew:
Beauty, espoused of free aspiring Mind,
Bringing to birth a world made wise and kind.

Written near the site of the hotel where Shelley stayed, and in view of the villa where Byron lived.

PASSIONATE AUTUMN

Snow on the Juras has oblivion rolled
Where summer's perished progeny are urned;
And in the valleys rowdy showers have spurned
Forest regalities discrowned in mould.

Yet may a magic story still be told
—Though all men's mystic hieroglyphs were
burned—
Where alchemy of autumn now has turned
The cascades of the silver birch to gold.

What had green youth, for all its vain desire,
To match these passionate splendours of decay?
The sun but lent the woods an alien fire.
It fades: but ember trees now glow and sway
Self-kindled in a wind that high has blown
Fragments of flame, expiring, but their own.

ROMANCE

In a steamer on Lake Geneva

Beauty from sapphire lake and heaven calls,
And calls from emerald hill and silver stream;
But calls in vain to eyes that are agleam
With eager search for sight of Chillon's walls.
Unto a Word of Power these hearts are thralls.
Romance is tyrant in the seat supreme.
The mood and magic of a poet's dream
Across the soul in dim enchantment falls.
O Beauty, beckoning from floor to dome!
Forgive those eyes if, turned from thee, they sin.

The human spirit's instinct seeks as home
Places made sacred by its singing kin;
There tastes what powers in its own being sit,
And through the finite feels its infinite.

IN A DANCE-HALL

Here through your glaring heaven of sound
I pass like Dante through his hell.
Yet here is hint of holy ground,
And some high tale that you could tell,

Had you but vision to surmise
What Gods the God-in-you would greet,
What exile hunger lights your eyes,
What cosmic impulse moves your feet.

In your most dark desires I see
Of spirit-blooms the breaking shards.
Your drink apes ecstasy to be,
Your very smoke gropes heavenwards.

Something up-calls you from the brute,
And casts you an inviting glance
To blow with Krishna on His Flute
And step with Shiva in His Dance!

Rotterdam.

PEACE

An anticipation

Now God be praised, and all gods;
And if these be a dream,
Praise be to the God in man
Who his heart again hath raised,
And a hope's faint gleam
To flame doth fan;
To the red-eyed plan
Of the war-drunk demon-dancers,
Whose life is strife's increase,
Has chorused the many voices of man
To a single voice that answers:
“Let there be peace!”

“Lo! now,” saith Man’s spirit, “Give ear!
Old feuds I have fed on,
False hates that my true heart hid,
The legend of fear,
And the nightmare of Armageddon
Inscribed on scroll and pyramid,
I put to the spirit’s sword!
Ye prophets that lipped your
Vain blessing and ban!
For your ‘Thus saith the Lord,’
(Though no Lord scrolled your scripture)
Write: ‘Thus saith Man:’

“ I shall rest no more my will,
My thought, my wish on
The mouldered past;
Nor my heart’s need fill
With empty superstition;
But these out-cast;
And from Life and the Truth of Life
New vision borrow;
And in Heaven’s full view
The saga of purposeful strife,
Of joy and sorrow,
Shall write anew.

“ Give ear, O women, O men,
O creed, O nation,
Long self-estranged!
Behold at your lips
The Water of Liberation:
Drink—and be changed!
Henceforth shall your dream and hunger,
Mute or spoken,
Adventure’s lure,
By the measure of shackles shed,
Of bondage broken,
Decline or endure.

“ Fear not, though freedom were one
With a wild desire

In ages gone.
Lo! out of the sun
Comes forth in purging fire
True Freedom's dawn:
For, as light in a cloudy mesh,
Shall spirit in substance striving,
Exalt and illumine the whole;
And the urge of the flesh
Be but spur and rein to the driving
Desire of the Soul."

" Not yet," saith the Spirit of Man,
" Have we perfect sight of
The peace-full hour.
Lo! now must we break and ban
The confederate might of
Perverted power
That denies the grace
Once granted to children's crying,
Would sow for a harvest of dearth,
And across the insulted face
Of heaven flying,
Drop hell on earth.

" Oh! then, when swept are the skies,
And earth upraises
Clean hands from seas serene;

And man in the eyes
Of man unfearful gazes,
Shall a wonder be heard and seen;
For forth in ecstatic swells
From a myriad steeples
Shall flow a music-flood,
The marriage-bells
Of the long love-famished peoples
Made now one breath, one blood.

“ Yea, out of the ground,
Called up by Man’s new vigour,
Through branch and sod
Shall one beauty abound
In undreamt-of hue and figure,
A Garden of God;
And the ravening creatures of night,
In Man’s joy sharers,
From mutual murder freed,
Shall come forth into light
From the vanished twilight of terrors,
And earth have peace indeed!”

RETROSPECTION

To Nathalia Crane

Round the rich table rumour stalked
Through gossip of the town
To snare what things two poets talked,
White head by curly brown.

And what we talked was—tigers, snakes,
Snow summits, storm-torn bay,
And the vague wilderness that shakes
Men's hearts as sure as they.

We talked of whales, and parrot wings,
Rope-trick and poisoned dart;
Of everything—except the things
Nearest a poet's heart.

For that which moves past life and death
—Rapt thought, exalted mood—
We took as simply as our breath,
Accepted, understood.

We met as comrades of the craft,
But doffed the craftsman's gown,
And over solemn trifles laughed
Each other's secret down.

Yet in each instant something stirred
In depths no eye could see,
That asked no hushed mysterious word,
All Speech being Mystery!

After a Poetry Dinner, Philadelphia, February, 1929.

CANYONS

I watched the Colorado River gleam
A mile below me from the Canyon's edge.
Far down, the trees were statured as the sedge,
The broad full torrent was a ribbon-stream.
I thought of cities where, with strut and beam,
Strong arm, quick brain, Man lifted, ledge on ledge,
His canyon-streets until their clouded wedge
Threatened old Heaven with Man's new Babel-dream.

O land whose golden age lies all ahead,
Not in a past the present falsifies!
Thy life-stream from no earthly spring is fed:
It rears, not delves, its canyons unto skies
Whose future stars will round thy turrets hang
Themes for great song not even Whitman sang!

FLYING THINGS

At twenty dizzy storeys from the ground
I heard Chicago its wild welcome fling
At a great fishlike, shining, roaring thing
That blazed an airy trail the earth around.
And I recalled how I had watched a browned
Small humming-bird, on speed-invisible wing,
Before a purple-black petunia swing,
And sip its honey, poised with murmuring sound.

No one applauded! But my heart applauds
All flying things, all things desiring flight;
And mostly man, who, against awful odds,
Straining to rise from darkness into light,
Would barter all that heart and brain has stirred
To learn the simple secret of a bird!

REACTION

Because I have grown tired of empty power
And painted faces stalking trivial fame,
While the white soul is left in rags to cower,
And mouldering flesh is flaunted without shame;
I would draw near the silence of a flower
And the majestic posture of a flame,
That I might find for speech its perfect hour,
And look on Beauty wholly free from blame.

Hollywood, California, 1929.

HAREBELLS

*in Donegal
and California*

I

Under a wind
From the North Pole
Their heads inclined.
Straightway my soul

For music's rush
Was one bent ear;
Like the quick thrush
That, venturing near

Where sods rain-darkened
Behind a storm,
Head-tilted hearkened
For morning's worm.

For I felt sure
In heart and mind,
All things endure
A self-same wind

That breaks the glancing
Poplar veil,
And shakes the dancing
Peacock's tail;

One heart makes sing
Where planets call
And harebells swing
In Donegal.

So I was certain
I should hear
Sounds yet unheard in
Music's ear,

Could but the riot
In sense and stuff
Attain to quiet
Deep enough

To bring to me
In sparkling spate,
Inaudibly
Articulate,

Their answering stammers,
Echoing jars,
To pulsing hammers
Of the stars.

II

Years passed and hazed
That memory:
Asia erased
Dunfanaghy;

Till suddenly,
When free from care
Beside a sea,
I, wandering where

Old men for metals
Dug when young,
Saw the red petals,
Flaming tongue,

Of day's hibiscus
Radiate
Through San Francisco's
Golden Gate;

And, apropos
Of nothing, heard
From long ago
A thrush-like word:
“ Let blooms be shed
And years divide;
Nothing is dead
Of all that died.”

And at that hint
And loosened spells,
Came the sky-tint
Of swung harebells,

With tunes divined
Deep in the soul,
Stirred by a wind
From some dim pole.

MORNING SONG IN HAWAII

Let us in worship-song unite
Unto the Lady of Delight
Here on the marge of her domain—
The grey-eyed Spirit of the Rain,
Who drapes the sun with cloudy fears,
Then lightly laughs herself to tears;
And for her heart's expended powers
Receives the trembling thanks of flowers
Spread on a rainbowed carpet meet
For passage of her pearly feet.

Oh! more than thanks of flower and tree
She hath from opened eyes that see
In falling rain, in seas that smile
Around this paradisal isle,
And in the spent volcano's cone,

A deeper Being than their own,
Which rounds to beauty the uncouth
Cicatrix of a fiery youth,
And changes to a mood of mirth
The ancient agonies of earth!

Mount Tantalus, Honolulu.

THE FAN

Just as the day's drooped spirit had begun
Down darkening tides to drift
In sleepy swirls between
Clouds of blue-black and seas of olive-green,
Seeking some haven out of time and place;
A sudden, swift
Conspiracy of rain
And setting sun
Through the thick brain
Of heaven ran;
Gave to ill-favoured gloom all colour's grace,
And stretched across its clouded face
A rainbow-fan
That briefly in a spectral arc reposed . . .
Then closed.

Yet in that moment I had inner sight
Of an immense mysterious wand of light
Upheld in front of fundamental night,

That at its zenith split and spread
Spoke-wise to left and right
From overhead,
Until it seemed to span
The savage dark
With colour's rhythmic rule,
And in majestic oscillation cool
The face of Chaos with a cosmic fan,
Whose sevenfold arc
Line over line disclosed
The hues that had reposed
In the aeonian all-enfolding white,
As in the moon-pale bud the tinted flower:
 Violet for fathering Power,
 Indigo for Duty's yoke,
 Blue for Mother Nature's cloak,
 Green for Life—its joy and care,
 Yellow for Wisdom gathered there,
 Orange to match the Mind's deep fire,
 Red for Struggle and Desire.

What more I might have seen I cannot tell,
For on that vision fell
The curtain of the visible, that hides
What at the heart of things abides,
Lest the unveiled reality defeat
Man's double destiny—to win
Sight from without and insight from within

Till, through much toil, outer and inner meet,
As first seed in the last sheaf harvested.

Yet, though that vision fled,
My spirit's hearth keeps homely with the glow
Of those implicit heavens. Well I know
That the keen current of my blood
Feels not alone the pull of passionate red;
But that along my veins
Runs the rainbow-coloured flood
That scintillates through Sirius, and strains
Star gladness through the prism of a tear.
Yea, even as in Japan
Poets in rhythmic syllables indite
The joy in grief, the sadness in delight,
The blossoms that proclaim the withering year,
Upon an open fan;
So on the cosmic quadrant One doth write,
Not the high praise alone of Titan Powers
In lightning's flourish of calligraphy,
Nor of vast Presences that move the sea
In chanting lines, as once they moved the land
In its young fiery pliant hours.
Nay, that inscrutable Hand
Moment by moment, in more intimate script,
Inscribes the ballad of our human throes
Lightened by pleasures exquisitely lipped;
Nor God nor mortal knows

Of that brave song the uttermost content,
What triads of endeavour, joys and woes,
What lyrics of divine accomplishment,
Before, upon the final Ode to Man,
Creation's fan
Shall close.

The Eastern Sea, between Japan and China, 1929

THE GIRDLE

Dear! by God's grace and our good luck,
We, trusting Fate to fill our need,
Essayed the enterprise of Puck,
But not at Puck's enchanted speed.
He had winged magic at command
To cleave the air with flying robe.
Our way was close to sea and land
To draw love's girdle round the globe.

I think that wiser eyes than ours
A subtler Earth than ours must see,
And map by their exalted powers
A more divine geography:
For ocean lone and mountain stark—
Love's depth and aspiration's height;
And on that spirit-map must mark
A path of rose-and-golden light.

That is the trail, beloved, we blazed
Through dread of war to dream of peace;
From ancient realms where eyes are raised
To scan dim signals of release,
Through lands on whose bent shoulders rest
The burdens of the sorrow-wise,
To the young titan of the west
Who holds the future in his eyes.

O love! our love around the globe
Girdles all souls on sea and land;
Though with no flying wizard robe
Or fairy magic at command,
But only at love's lingering speed,
We end the enterprise of Puck,
Through labour for the body's need,
And by God's grace and our good luck.

India, April, 1928—November, 1929, via Europe and America.

NOW ALL IS PAST AND DONE

Now all is past and done,—
And all to begin again;
With a lifetime set with the sun,
And a night bewildered by rain;

And a lamp gone out whose beam
Could have broken a century's gloom;
And a high desire and a dream
As a child dead in the womb.

Now only a failing blade
Is the need, for a slackening duel
Between a shade and a Shade,
And a coin for the final fuel.

Yet, equal in foolish state
Are triumph and hopes that fail
In the count of the Ultimate,
If there be truth in the tale

That is told of the hero Cuchullin,
Who returned from breaking a wrong,
And found it exceedingly dull in
The courts of the Gods, with no song

To welcome Lugaid and Laeg
And himself from the deeds they had wrought;
For the Gods, with eyes grown vague
From gazing long upon Nought,

Murmured: “A shuffling of feet
The Silence a moment cleft!”
And Cuchullin slid to his seat—
That he had never left;

Where shadow and substance are one,
In the circle of Perfected Men,
With all past and done,—
And all to begin again.

Colombo, May 3, 1930.

IN A SWISS GARDEN

O trees and flowers and butterflies!
A moment from your labour cease.
I think you must be very wise,
You have about you such great peace.

T: “ We house all comers free of rent:”
F: “ We scatter for the common good:”
B: “ To serve creation is our bent:”
They said. I heard—and understood.

O trees and flowers and butterflies!
May God our usefulness increase!
I think *we* must be very wise
Who know the simple path to peace.

Vandoeuvres, Geneva.

THE TROTH

I

Love, when Love's self was all in all,
Us two sent forth one troth to keep;
One spirit through the deep to call,
And one to answer from the deep.

And down the long descent our cry
Linked the wild hearts of cosmic storm.
Our searchings made Life's shuttle fly
Through the dim webs of power and form.

Our joy the misty systems swung
Upon our flaming finger-tips.
Our separated sorrow wrung
Stupendous sighs from burning lips . . .

From our twin nebulae we sprang . . .
We swam the pale galactic tide . . .
Felt round with fierce volcanic fang . . .
And raged . . . and rested . . . side by side.

From age-long sleep we greenly woke
Root-wedded on a rocky steep . . .
Dream-urged, our captive bonds we broke
Through jungles hungrily to creep . . .

Until, through pendulous birth and death,
We raised our heads and stretched our knees,
And breathed a strange exalted breath
Among enchanted flowers and trees;

And heard a Voice like to a lute
Of thunder say: "Lo! without let
All this is thine; but of one fruit
Thou shalt not eat." And so we ate.

We dared the curse on venturous doubt—
Labour and sweat, pain and the grave—
Knowing the Sword that drove us out
But each to each the closer drove.

One mutual flame in heart and mind
Lured us beyond the rust of rest.
We knew no treasure we should find
Could match the glory of the Quest;

The glory, exultation, strife;
The bay-crowned and the thorn-wreathed brow;
The joy of intermingled life;
The pain of severance . . . as now,

When Love, whose power is all in all,
Has cast me forth, some troth to keep;
A spirit through the deep to call,
And strain for answer from the deep.

II

O distant love! palm-shadows fall
In benediction on your way.
At evening, lizards on your wall
Creep forth to listen while you play

Brahms and Beethoven, Schumann, Liszt,
Chopin, Debussy, Scott, Ravel;
And in the morning, spirit-kissed
By lips that would their blessing tell,

You will set out with brave high head
To share the life tumultuous,
Where wakening India strives to shed
Her sprawled soul-stifling incubus,

And strives to hail the dawning hope
That lit new light in human glance,
But pales now on the threatening slope
Of unrepentant arrogance

Passed on by hands that still would wield
Man's power for greed's or custom's fee,
And, unheroic-hearted, yield
All save essential liberty.

Dear love! the sundering waters thrill
With pulsings of your fiery heart
Beating to break the twisted will
That holds the minds of men apart;

For we have shared love's glad increase,
The squandered heart's immediate gain;
And know the rich unshaken peace
Of freedom's voluntary chain.

And though some doom has drawn my feet
Far from you, some old troth to keep,
Our sundered hearts unsundered meet
In one deep cry across the deep,

That She, whose visions radiate
The secret of Man's growth and goal,
Be freed for her world-healing fate,
Lest Earth's exasperated soul,

With outraged patience cancelled quite,
Rise, and wipe out with fiery tears
And bury in Atlantean night
The sin that splits the hemispheres.

III

Dear love! from strident city street
My Ariel's chanting in the air
Has guided my world-wandering feet
To sunned and scented quiet, where,

Based on the blue Odyssean sea,
Smoke-plumed Vesuvius rises clear;
And in the mists of memory
The soul of Shelley hovers near,

Singing the song, that ever lives
While Time all triumphs overthrows,
The song of peace the Spirit gives,
Of freedom Love alone bestows.

Here has pure friendship, nature, art,
Set high on Capri's towering isle
A home of beauty, where the heart
Spreads in the spirit's quiet smile.

And here, in long pellucid hours
When dusk the hot sirocco cools,
From tall, fantastic, rocky towers
I look on tideless, windless pools,

Turquoise, dove-blue and apple-green,
Inlaid enamelled chalices
Filled from the sea that sighs between
Dead Cæsar's perished palaces,

And subtly coils with searching fang
Round rocks where inner ears again
May catch the song the sirens sang
To lure Ulysses and his men.

Here watch I through festoons of vine
The going sun, in Bacchic jape,
Splashing Solaro's ridge with wine
Before his fire has browned the grape

That in heart-shapen clusters draws
Heart's-blood of Earth; while olive trees
Decant smooth drops by heavenly laws
From secret earth-distilleries;

And sly goat-footed breezes play
Their pan-pipes, and from twilight's trance
Rouse the slim cypresses to sway
In a rapt pause of ritual dance.

But not alone these gentle powers
Delectably the daylight fill.
In spangled night's melodious hours
A sudden, deep, portentous thrill

Stifles the serenading notes
Of nature's troubadours, and bids
The housed and meditative goats
To carry out their whimpering kids;

And from my stellar heritage
Fans up the flame of old desires
In which my spirit shares the rage
Of captive and rebellious fires

Whose insurrection wildly wakes,
With whirling fierce flame-bladed thrust,
The old Vesuvian power that shakes
Man and his labours to the dust.

IV

O love! more deep than grief or mirth
My brooding heart would fain draw near
The ancient oracle of Earth
With true interpretative ear;

For here a Presence in cool eves,
By fruiting and by fruitless trees,
Walks where the fabled fig still weaves
The old Edenic draperies

That did our disobedience tell,
And called the swift exiling knife
That flashed behind us when we fell,
Esteeming knowledge more than life.

In veiled but penetrating eyes
I feel the symbol-signs that say
How buried seeds of Paradise
Trouble with dreams the drowsy clay;

How, mixed in worthlessness and worth,
Inscribed on banner and on urn,
The Love, O love! that drove us forth
But rounds departure to return

Unto companionship with Them
That bask in an unsullied sun,
When, on the soul's unwithering stem,
Knowledge and life shall bloom as one;

When passion to compassion grows;
When vision sees in hand that delves,
In wing that soars, in friends and foes,
But adumbrations of ourselves;

When dies the crimson wandering fire
As radiant Love assumes control,
And incantations of desire
Yield to enchantments of the soul.

V

Dear! from a dream this morn I woke
Of morning's old familiar grace;
But ah! my salutation broke
On unresponsive time and space.

Nor could love's chariot, lightning-drawn,
O'er take the heart's imagined boon:
I bloomed in pale Italian dawn;
You wilted in the tropic noon.

Yet, solace for all sundered souls,
My lips with inner joy repeat:
"Lo! at the spirit's hidden poles
All separate meridians meet."

Time ends the pact by time begun:
But neither time nor space can mar
A tryst that antedates the sun,
A bond sealed on a vanished star.

Oh! we who have in will essayed
To love in the celestial way,
Dare not our mutual Gods degrade
Through frail alliances with clay.

Not the most poignant inward reach
Of trellised fingers, mingled eyes,

Nor all the songs in love's warm speech
That holy passion pacifies.

Higher than exile's aching walls,
Clearer than joy in union lit,
Through life's frail finitudes it calls
From infinite to infinite.

And not alone doth love invite
Our hearts on that high quest to go:
All life's desirings of delight
Press on with us; for well we know

What comrades crowd the spiral track
Trod out in star-dust and in loam,
Where pressing on is hastening back,
And even truant feet go home;

And where, by reckonings that flout
The rude arithmetic of men,
Two souls from Eden-gate went out—
And only two shall come again.

For, mixed in seraph, sage and elf,
In wandering waters, captive trees,
Life, through enlargements of itself
Moves on to mightier syntheses;

Compacting to an instant's glance
All that through sight the senses stirred;
Hushing life's myriad utterance
Back to the one enfolding Word;

Till shrink the forests to a seed,
The sea into a raindrop slips;
And music is again a reed
At Pan's, a flute at Krishna's, lips.

Waiting once more the ancient call
To play us forth Love's Troth to keep;
One spirit through the deep to call,
And one to answer from the deep.

Anacapri, July, 1930

TO IRELAND

Something within this earth of me
With yours an ancient friendship knows;
But deeper than nativity
My ultimate allegiance goes.

Unto my heart's wild seaward strife
You spread the foot-spring of the shore;
You were to me the door of life,
But life grew larger than its door.

I loved your paths, for on them dawning
The vision of the Hidden Way
Through passion to a tryst beyond
The transient liaison of clay.

I loved your toil, when seed was laid,
Or flail-men parted grain and husk.
I loved the joy of man and maid
Dancing at Ventry in the dusk.

I loved your moods of gold and grey;
That hour when, to the heart's delight,
The ebbing deluge of the day
Left quivering drops on boughs of night.

But most I loved, when day was done,
Your hearths when on the folk-tale fell
A light more splendid than the sun
From seraph-winged Salathiel.

With these my dreaming heart abides.
Towards these unto the end shall go
Below the drift of all my tides
A deep unswerving undertow.

I know a legend-haunted place
Where I can wander night or day
With quick or dead, the ancient race
Of comrades on the upward Way;

Poets who heard a distant drum
That rallied visions to their eyes
Of holy Ireland free; and some
Who gladly fell that She might rise.

And in and out through these will go
The flicker of the flame-faced kings
Who touch men's hearts with heavenly glow
And give their thoughts the lift of wings.

These unto me Their hands will reach
Over the archway of the sun,
Speaking the single spirit-speech
From heights where East and West are one.

Before the blinding morning breaks
I shall step out behind a star
And seek the quiet haunted lakes
And hills where my De Dananns are.

THE TESTING OF FINN

To Sonia

*If any man would travel free
From the remonstrance of the Shee,
Let not his thoughts go wandering
From this to that unsteady thing
Of duty or desire.*

This rule
Was learned by Finn, the son of Cool,
When for his chiefs he laid a feast
Would cheer the heart of man and beast.

Because of something on the wind,
Two dogs went hunting through his mind,
And split his thought and deed, until
He let the honey-liquor spill
Out of the loving-cup that passed
From lip to lip. Then at a blast
That smelt of space and chase, he slipped
Unnoticed from the feast, and gripped
His hunting-gear, and swiftly stepped
Along the scent his hunters kept
After a slender flying doe.

*Ah! Finn, the wise one, did not know
The thing that stirred his hunting-lust
Was but a shape of light and dust
Such as the shrewd Immortals plan
To test the wavering heart of man.*

Swiftly he sped by marsh and brake
Till, on the margin of a lake,
Dead went the rapture of the chase
Before a lovely troubled face,
And bountiful dishevelled hair,
And hands uplifted in despair.

*Unruffled must the vision be
To catch the glimmer of the Shee;
And Finn's, being muddied and unfixed,
With feast and chase and beauty mixed,
Too clouded with desire to know
A woman from a slender doe,
Could only see the thing he saw!*

“O mighty hero without flaw!
Help me,” she cried, “for pity’s sake!
My ring has fallen in the lake!”
Finn’s hero-figure left the ground,
And struck the water with a sound
That shook Slieve Guilin’s rocky wall
And echoed round the feasting-hall

Far-off, and stilled the feasters' din
With glance and question: "Where is Finn?
Or is the sitting in his chair
Turned for a Druid whim to air?"

*For Finn, they knew, was magic-skilled
When he was rapt and single-willed.*

But elsewhere, like a mighty fish,
Finn, at the lovely lady's wish,
Dredged the deep lake from shore to shore
Until upon its muddy floor
He found the object of his search.
Then shoreward, like a monstrous perch
Line-fagged, and ready to be gaffed,
He swam. The lovely lady laughed—

*And there was something in her face
That showed her not of mortal race,
But such as the Immortals plan
To try the moody heart of man.*

And when great Finn would stroke her hair,
She was a whirl of leaves and air.
And, being neither old nor young,
She pushed her hand through time, and flung
Finn's share of years upon his head,
And laughed a windy laugh, and fled,
And left him in decrepitude!

Across the land Finn's chiefs pursued
The tracks of huntsman and of hound
By stony field and marshy ground
Until, beside the lake, they ran
Upon the ruins of a man,
An ancient memory of Finn,
That croaked: *This day I sinned a sin*
In slipping from the feasting-place
At the allurement of the chase;
And thus I lost the single will
That would have matched her magic skill!

Thereat, upon their close-hooked shields
They bore Finn's remnant over fields,
With labouring breath from jolts and jogs
Through woods and weeds and sliding bogs,
By heathery slope and stony ditch,
To find Slieve Guilin's subtle witch;
For well they knew, with angry grief,
Who put enchantment on their chief.

At length, before the fairy-place
They laid him down. A lovely face
Moon-calm, and bounteous shining hair,
And hands that knew not human care,
Upon the threshold of her cave

Met them with welcome kind and grave;
And stilled their pleading, threatening cries
With symbolled language in her eyes,
That said: *Now Finn the secret knows:*

And knowledge is the end of woes;
And fairy hands are robbed of skill
Before the rapt and single will.

And, being neither old nor young,
She broke the spell of time, and flung
Finn's share of years from off his head,
And laughed a windy laugh, and fled,
While her dim cave dissolved from sight.

Then Finn arose in hero-might—
And echoes answered down a glen
The homeward march of brooding men.

A free interpretation of "Laoi na Seilge" (Song of the Hunt), an Irish bardic tale.

Shee—Gaelic 'sidhe', people of the wind, fairy-people.

The Celtic Immortals are the Tuatha De Danann, the people of the Goddess Dana.

A whirl of dust and leaves is regarded as a passing fairy.

A BARDIC CHANT

When, in hedge and haggard,
Laggard leaf and wing
Unto song awaken,
Shaken by the spring;
Death, who, stormy-worded,
Lorded hills and plains,
Falleth pale and pronely;—
Only life remains.

Life, released, resurgent,
Urgent, hero-willed,
Marches where the larches
Arches bravely build;
Hears rain-lances, slanting,
Chanting through the glen:
“ Though the summer closes,
Roses bloom again.”

Chestnut stems, carousing,
House the drowsy strains
Where the generous Mother
Other lives sustains.
And the wise, who wonder
Under oaks and firs,
Know the life unending,
Blending theirs with Hers.

After the metrical manner of the Irish bards.

LOVE'S ECONOMY

A Villanelle thirty years after

You looked so good, so rare,
That, when love neared its prize,
I only touched your hair.

My wild heart did not dare
More nearness to devise,
You looked so good, so rare.

Yea, though your smile made fair
Your brave illustrious eyes,
I only touched your hair.

What lost I to prefer
Soul's touch to body's cries,
You looked so good, so rare?

Oh! love's long wealth they share
Who love economise:
I only touched your hair.

Now life has joy to spare
Because, by love made wise,
You looked so good, so rare,
I only touched your hair.

THE HIGHER MAGIC

A Villanelle

Blood of my heart, my brain's white thought,
I offered at a secret shrine
Mixed in a goblet richly wrought.

A sudden hand of lightning caught
And lifted in a dazzling shine
Blood of my heart, my brain's white thought.

Someone behind the veil of nought
Did to Her lips a draught incline
Mixed in a goblet richly wrought.

I was with ecstasy distraught
As though were mixed with magic wine
Blood of my heart, my brain's white thought.

For these were so divinely fraught
With ardours from a drink divine
Mixed in a goblet richly wrought,

That I since then have only sought
One answer: Be they hers or mine,
Blood of my heart, my brain's white thought,
Mixed in a goblet richly wrought?

A MUSICIAN'S HOME

To Henry and Ethel Eichheim

EXTERIOR

Suddenly sight through insight passed, to where
Enchanted fingers on invisible staves
Translated shapes and hues to rhythmic waves,
And flowers flung sound, not scent, upon the air.
I caught the crackling of the poppy's flare
Making elegiac murmurs over graves,
While Marguerite sang the virgin song that saves,
And Canterbury bells rang time for prayer.

Foxglove, poinsettia, dahlia, row by row
Upstanding, caroled to delphinium's wand.
I heard the lilies a loud fanfare blow
Goldenly under Gabriel's hidden hand,
And for a moment silence music's foe
That roared its threat from sky and sea and land.

INTERIOR

And when, day done, fair hands whose wing-wafts
lent
The touch of life that ivory silence thrills;
And fingers whose deft wizardry distils
Through string on string sound's rapturous content;
Repeat, through art, creation's vast event;
Oh! then new earth, new heaven, the vision fills—

His melody the skyline to new hills;
Her harmony a star-built firmament.

They cease. But silence is no longer strange:
It folds all music under waiting wings
As Spring her seedlings in the Winter's grange.
We see, commingled in the flux of things,
Beauty immortalized through mortal change,
And Life survive a thousand perishings.

Santa Barbara, California.

THE CHOICE

If choose I must a resting-place
What time my feet begin to fail;
By God's most hospitable grace
I choose a brook-side in a vale.

I ask not ocean's trumpetings,
Or hills that hearken to the skies;
For one is loud with questionings,
And one is quiet with replies.

But by my brooklet's lyric leap
My heart may contemplate at ease
Life's deep desirings for the deep
Mingled with mountain memories;

And mine own rivulet of rhyme
May run from summit unto sea,
Singing between the banks of time
The music of eternity.

PENNSYLVANIAN SONNETS

For Sara and Robert Logan

1. BY THE RIVER DELAWARE

A great blue-heron slopes across my eyes,
And on a quiet pool his shadow flings;
Then scans around his feet the expanding rings,
Contented with a reedy paradise;
While, overhead, man's droning dragon-flies,
Seeking to shrink the magnitudes of things
With his courageous mimicry of wings,
Shatter and sting the unoffending skies.

Tall bulrushes a happy secret hear
And whisper as if cradled they espied
Reasons why Pharaoh's daughter should appear.
Broad spatterdocks, wave-lifted side by side,
Sink not as sinks the stream, but stoutly rear
Their heads on high, and wait another tide.

2. ORCHARD WINDFALLS

From branches veiled by branches from the eye,
Pears that their lowlier kindred quite outgrew,
Reaching a sweeter savour, ruddier hue,
Drop to the earth, and where they drop they lie.

Here is choice feasting for the butterfly,
Gold-winged with edgings from a smoking flue,
Or black circumferenced with gold and blue—
The bright stigmata of the sun and sky.

And while my ears imbibe the leafy chimes
Of stems whose upward urgings heavenward call,
The feasters open and close in lazy rhymes
Their sated pinions—caring not at all
That life unsatisfied is life that climbs,
And life that reaches fruitage reaches fall.

3. WOODLAND DUSK

The shadows of the trees across the grass
Are slanted emerald imposed on jade.
Between the oaks the levelling sunrays pass,
And stencil maple boles with beechen shade.
A squirrel seeks his refuge hidden high.
Two birds like furtive shadows darkly climb
Unto their casual caravanserai
In comradeship beyond the nesting-time.
Now stands each tree-trunk as a blackened husk
With smoke low-hanging in green-glimmering bands.
Now, in the transformations of the dusk,
They turn to sails hoisted by unseen hands
On straining masts, to drive the mundane barque
Into the vast adventure of the dark.

4. WOODLAND JOY

Lightly a breeze the nervous poplars thrills,
Yet their leaf-cymbals no heard music make.
Out of their sleep the hid cicadæ break
And flutter their tambourines with tremulous trills.
All things with joy the rhythmic moment fills.
The flowering weed-communities awake
With golden-rod their dancing heads to shake,
And lace-wort wears Queen Anne's white-spreading
frills.

Wingless and winged their ecstasy combine.
Three yellow moths with life's keen joy conspire.
Out of the grass they rise and flicker and shine,
Up, up and up, in glimmering frantic gyre;
And with my heart's high yearnings intertwine,
Spiralling sparks towards our ancestral fire.

Sarobia, Eddington.

INVISIBLE DESIGN

To a Butterfly

Honey from blooms the zephyr swings
And fitful flight your day fulfil;
And out of these, upon your wings,
The wizard hands of life distil
In rhythmic line and rainbow tone
A beauty you have never known.

And should my honey-days depart,
And all seem ruin round me spread,
I shall remember, and take heart,
Knowing that somewhere overhead
Expands in deeper eyes than mine
My soul's invisible design.

GLADIOLUS

In an occidental garden

With what word canst thou console us?
Queried I of gladiolus,
As I mused in mood Uranian
Soothed in shadows Penn-sylvanian;
Thinking revelation lit
Shape and hue so exquisite;
And that through her upward reach
Strove interpretable speech.
But my brain's petition stirred
No illuminating word.
Only through the throbbing air
Glowed her torch's crimson flare.
Yet it lit a way from strife
To the peace of perfect life,
Where, forgetting even her,
Something in me seemed to stir,
Telling inner ear and eye:
"Silence is her deep reply;
Silence, whence all meanings come

When the gossip mind is dumb;
When thy heart has found release
At the touch of nature's peace;
And, with cheek to spirit-cheek,
I, thy Self, with thee may speak.”
Then I knew whence come the moods
I have known in quiet woods;
And the holiness of hours
With the sisterhood of flowers;
Whence that look that understands,
And that laying on of hands!

CROSSED PURPOSES

God, at the First, resolved His shaping Thought
Into things motionless (hills, forests, flowers);
And into moving things (winds, lightnings, showers,
Creatures of earth and sky) his Feeling wrought.
But seeing that each might foil the end He sought
If chained unto its own perfected powers
(Thought to cold thinking; feeling, to its hours
Of flame, in its own conflagration caught);—

He sent the spur of earthquake, tempest, fire,
To rouse rigidities to fluctuant moods?
And laid upon the shiftings of desire
The sweet stabilities of nests and broods.
And Man, with double urge to speed and sloth,
Slave unto either, loses joy of both.

AN ANNIVERSARY

April 9, 1903-1931

I walked into the air;
For walls I found
Inadequate to share
The spreading ground

Of my felicity
That skyward rose
For that which came to me
(And never goes)

That day of all my days
That pivoted
My life, in wondrous ways
Supremely wed;

So that, while calends count
Year following year,
My soul's memorials mount,
A growing sphere

That, on Love's orbit cast,
Through heaven swings,
Girt gloriously with vast
Saturnian rings

Round whose detergent fires
My spirit flies
After what soul desires
And sense denies;

My brow and breast laid bare
Along Life's wind;
The years my lengthening hair
Curving behind.

As thus I musing walked
In the heart's haze,
Nature comradely talked
In divers ways

In wind and flower and wood;
Yet all conjoint
To magnify my mood;
And—to the point—

Two swallows folded sleek
Home-hunting wings,
And gossiped beak to beak
Of household things;

And with commanding call
A woodpecker,
Like a capped cardinal,
Climbed his tree-stair

With solemn pulpit-stride
Till, out of sight
Of gossips scandal-eyed,
He drummed delight.

Likewise, a wrinkled oak,
Touched by the day,
Some old tree-language spoke
And seemed to say

That, had I power to pry
Her secret near,
In that charmed moment I
Might see and hear

The iris round her root
As anklets ring,
And on a twirling foot
Her skirts outswing,

And all her being thrill
In happy dance,
Though so sedately still
To my dull glance.

One thing stood strangely mute.
An orange-tree
So pompous was with fruit,
I smiled to see

A fancied circus-wight,
No longer young,
His conscious breast with bright
Gold medals hung.

Yet wrong I did it there,
That wordless tree,
Thinking it had no care
For mine or me;

For straightway came that scent
That symboleth
A mightier event
Than birth or death;

That scent of orange-flowers
That mutely tells
The consecrated towers
To swing their bells

And tell the universe
That on that day
Two souls on earth rehearse
The heavenly play

In which Life sets the tasks
To cell and sun
To seek behind their masks
The Hidden One.

Such thought, with mine to share,
I had not hoped.

All Life's live seasons there
Were telescoped

So wizardly complete,
It seemed to me
The solid counterfeit
Of the dream-tree

That Francis Thompson sang,
Whose vision made
Flower, leaf and fruitage hang
All undecayed.

Its wax-white, greenly-blent,
Virginal robes,
And spread accomplishment
Of golden globes,

Had meaning more profound,
More subtly wrought,
Than symphonies of sound,
Or delving thought,

Seeing they summed for me
Of mine own soul
The authentic history,
On whose deep scroll

Mysteriously meet
The Powers that move
The simultaneous feet
Of Life and Love;

That mingle sweet and sage,
Delight and truth;
And season gathering age
With gathered youth.

Therefore that voiceless tree
Played a veiled part,
That anniversary.
Its hidden heart

Seemed so to palpitate
In tune with mine,
I knew it knew the date
Was April nine;

That Maundy morn that brought
To me (and you)
The bliss the Shelleys sought,
The Brownings knew.

BIRTHDAY ODE

For Edwin Markham's eightieth anniversary

*"For the days of our years are threescore years and ten, and if by reason
of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength, labour and sorrow, for
it is soon cut off, and we fly away." PSALM, XC, 10.*

I

Homage and gratitude we offer thee,
Prophet who falsifies old prophecy
Of labour, sorrow, flight,
As the poor ultimate of fourscore years;
Who fillest thy days with toil that is delight;
And for thy destined flying hast no fears,
Thy singing heart being ever on the wing.

II

Aptly thy spirit sent thee with the spring
To break the prison-silence of the earth
With song's rebirth;
True comrade of the trumpet daffodil,
The silent herald, symbolling
The deep indignant music of the song
That thou shouldst bugle at the gates of wrong.
And all the vigour of that vernal will

Is with thee still.
On thy twin-branching heart and mind
Perpetual song-buds burst.
No second childhood canst thou find
Who hast not lost thy first.

III

Homage and gratitude we bring for this:
That thy crusading song took not the kiss
Of sense unsanctified;
But, with the spirit's pride,
Unmarred by warp or scathe
Held fast the faith
In love and righteousness,
In Man's frustrated will-to-bless,
And the close comradeship of suns and sods.

IV

Yet though thy minstrelsy applauds
The humblest servitor on land and sea,
Thou, like thy Phidias who, with inner eyes
On the Celestials, wrought celestially,
Singest no song to please the ears of men;
But with an ardour Shelleyan
Chantest the tragic hope of Man,
The eagle in the barnfowl's pen,
Chained to the clay, and hungering for the skies.¹

¹ "The Man with the Hoe."

V

In thee are life and song wed with a glance,
O brave apostle of dynamic dream!
Who contestest lofty utterance a deed
No less than labour for Man's fleshly need;
And holdest only worthy of esteem
The deed that is the spirit's utterance.

VI

Therefore, on thy heroic brow, where long
Thou hast endured the circlet of Man's woes,
Behold a mystery!
From thorn to thorn a spring time glory goes,
And through the magic of redemptive song
Breaks into bays of immortality!

New York, April 23, 1932.

CAPRI SONNETS AND SONGS

For Emilie van Kerckhoff and Sara de Swart

1. NATURE-PICTURES

Hyacinth calyces at dawn were ponds
Of dew in solemn adoration quaffed,
At which the gaping cactus-audience laughed—
Flat-visaged clowns bearded with diamonds.
Iris, in salutation to the sun,
A furled upstanding banner proudly bore;
But, sober-minded, at the noon-hour wore
A white-eared wimple humbly as a nun.
The sea, that patiently had borne a crowd
Of feline breezes that its face had mauled,
At evening, a light-spotted leopard, crawled
Quivering under a forest of low cloud,
Until the cloud became, in after-light,
A saurian fossil in the cliff of night.

2. ELEUSINIA

I

Last night I marched in vision with a crowd,
Bearing my branch with ritual gesturing,
Because Persephone had felt the spring,
And dark Demeter shed Her wintry shroud.
There was a mother-mood upon the cloud,

And infant lips in Earth's new burgeoning.
More than mere flight was in the halcyon's wing.
All life Life's ancient victory avowed.

I woke as one who his own phantom finds
Initiate in immortal Mystery
Whose earthward masks are moulded of the mind's
Collaboration with reality;
And knew that in the primal Mother's veins
The Eleusinian ecstasy remains.

II

Abas, an urchin in a scanty suit,
When lone Demeter stooped to quench Her thirst
Beside a spring, his lips in mockery pursed—
And found himself changed to a water-newt!
And She shall darken eyes that dare dispute
Lewdly the sanctuaries where life is nursed;
And muteness cast on mouths that have aspersed
Her mysteries with a lascivious lute.

But they are Her branch-bearers, who would break
No least integrity of shape or soul;
Who not mere knowing for true knowledge take;
But, reaching wholly towards Life's perfect whole,
Look not too coldly on the distant skies,
And not too warmly in Love's asking eyes!

3. DEATH IN SPRING

Pink almond blossom looks in wondering mood
Over a wall on that hard mystery:
A death in spring! death in the time of glee!
Death of a maiden fair and kind and good!
Behind the chanting priests and bier and rood
Stumbles a grief that stabs the heart to see:
Spouse of her mother, her own spouse-to-be,
Made brothers in frustrated fatherhood.

White on her catafalque the marriage veil
Hangs of "the bride of Jesus," newly-wed—
Solace for broken life's unwritten tale;
Sign of the soul's perfected Godlihead;—
Vain breath (some say) to fan hope's wavering spark;
Vain wistful whistle in the dreadful dark!

4. SPRING IN DEATH

One who was dead (some said) a thousand days,
Finding a winding path which hither led,
Paused on the margin of remembered ways
An hour of Earth, and held my hand, and said

(After much else): ". . . Then, when I broke life's
link,

I laughed aloud, though I could feel you cry,

You four about my bed.—*I did not think*

It would be such an easy thing to die!"

Out of her spring of love and loveliness

She bloomed into the comradeship divine; .

Bound not to Earth, but Earth to her no less

Bound fast in love for love; and with a sign

Across our shortening severance witnesseth

Unto the verity of spring in death!

A memory of A. L. P.

5. AFTER STORM

I

All day the sea
Chorused around the wall
Of high Capri;
But at the evening's fall
The maestro wind
Let fall his waving arms,
And left—behind
Exultings and alarms

Round cliffs and caves
When wildly sang the blast—
White hints of waves
After the waves had passed.

II

Round my heart's beach
Moved the striated swells
Of ocean-speech;
Remembered syllables
That held the hint
Of bloom when blooms are shed,
And roseate tint
When day's red rose is dead;
After the throng
The calm wide heart of one,
And silent song
When singing-time is done.

6. TRANSFERRED ALLEGIANCE

I

I came, a strayed ambassador
Out of a kingdom cursed by war,
Upon the queendom of a queen
Whose court was carpeted in green.

Thereon, in varied vesture, stood
Courtiers in ceremonial mood,
While their sweet sovereign, at her throne,
Stood gazing heavenwards, to own
Her Apollonian vassalage
To him who came, no war to wage,
Over Solaro's serried crest
In glittering gold and crimson dressed,
But to advance into her realm
A glance from underneath his helm
That claimed no tribute won in strife,
But her liege-loyalty of life,
And in his claiming would confer
All that her heart desired on her.

II

Right quickly her response she made
In beauty fearlessly displayed, —
Taking his ardent eye's caress
With simple regal saintliness;—
And on my brooding spirit spilled
Their surplusage of joy fulfilled.
Then I a strayed ambassador
Out of a world confused by war,
Where the gross cloud of selfish strife
Conceals the countenance of life;

Seeing their easy opulence
Who little seek and much dispense,
Possessing all, who all confer,
Transferred allegiance unto her
Because of what she gave to me—
That purple wild anemone
Who met the morning sun's caress
With her unfolded loveliness,
And imaged to my inner sight
The rich response of life to light.

7. ITERATION

I

Copper of withered oaks between
Olive-grey and cypress-green
Signal, to watchers wisdom-capped,
Winter and spring have overlapped.
But intervals of earthen-brown,
Where the seeds of hope are down,
Say that in intermingled strife
Of cold and heat, of death and life,
Are signals of a subtler thing—
That victory is with the spring.

Now what the outer eye saw clear
Is carried to the inner ear
By the exquisite absurd
Iterations of a bird
That from a flowered mimosa-tree
Chatters, with shining eye on me:

*“Hearken, Oh! hearken, birds and men!
Spring . . . spring! . . . the spring has
come again!!
Has come with dream
Of home, and gleam
Of breast
On nest
Soft laid
In shade,
When summer says
May’s deeper word
That makes the heart
Start in a bird:
And wing and beak
Seek to fulfil
Love’s new and fleet
Sweet tender will!”*

III

And then he stops . . .
And hops . . .
And turns
Another eye on me, that burns
With news that *Spring has come again!*

Listen! LISTEN!! birds and men!
As if a poet did not know
What makes the heart of nature glow
And sing—

The spring
Has come again!
As if—Oh! hearken, BIRDS and men!
As if a poet had not heard
A deeper song for man and bird;
A song whose inner vision knows
That springtime neither comes nor goes;
That earth and man and bud and wing,
For all their talk of travelling,
Forever wander towards the spring;
And errant feet, where they shall tire
Around the orbit of desire,
And break the ring
Of wintry care,
Shall find the spring
Await them there.

Anacapri, October 1932—March 1933.

EUROPEAN SONNETS, 1932-1933

I

Once more a myriad birds and beasts are slain
To greet Christ's Day; and pious hands have blessed
The gory orgies of the cruel West,
Their feasts of flesh poisoned by fear and pain.
The double kiss of Judas and of Cain
Defiles His brow, where love alone should rest.
Of His heart-kindred He is dispossessed;
And, vainly sacrificed, seems born in vain.

O outcast Christ! how can they find Thy peace,
They in whose veins runs creatures' agony;
How from their fratricidal conflict cease,
Unless again Thou take nativity?—
Oh! not in flesh, by flesh to be forsown,
But in man's heart, a flame of love reborn.

Christmas, 1932.

II

Now they have passed beyond their Christmas feast;
And, fleshly-willed, resume their fleshly care
That mocks the Message and the Messenger;
And turn to you, O Wise Men from the East!
They hear the voice of parson and of priest
Telling of gold and frankincense and myrrh;

And think your gifts no richer gifts declare,
And you and them a tale that long has ceased.

Oh! Wisdom, Aspiration, Purity
Bring once again for One who newly comes,
And give to Earth a new Epiphany;
For in the scroll of creature-martyrdoms
Perpetual Good Friday had sufficed—
The ceaseless crucifixion of the Christ!

Epiphany, 1933

The gold, frankincense and myrrh in the story of the Magi were symbols of wisdom, aspiration and purity

III

Scanning the tale of human turpitude—
Dearth mocked by plenty, art with the pander's leer,
Statecraft suborned by avarice, faith at feud,
World-murder waiting the feared beck of fear—
Almost my hand clasps his who would invoke,
On ill too vast for easy penitence,
The drastic therapy of seismic stroke
To rid Earth's body of man's corrupt offence;
Or the Atlantean foundering of a sin
Too deep for aught save that stern surgery
To cast its lopped memorials within
The unremembering archives of the sea.—
Ah! ere in speech the dreadful prayer is wrought,
Let love and wisdom slay the murderous thought!

IV

Swiftly Thy love's immunity impart,
Lord! to my veins against the infectious broods
Of taloned greed and power without a heart,
That would, in my uncareful interludes,
To the dire drum-beat of their bloody faith
Make dance the untransmuted residue
That haunts my brain, the jungle tribal wraith
That can some ancient animus renew;
I being not yet a hierophant of grace
Gifted the certainties of dawn to see
Across the darkness of this interspace
In hope's long dream of human destiny,
Where now, with supplicating eye and hand,
Master of Light! avid for light I stand.

V

O heart! where hope's high vision smites and breaks
Against the blinding barriers of sight;
Where all our starry dreams are fading flakes
Of phosphorescence on the sea of night;
Let us seek out the comradeship of powers
That, unperturbed by human perfidies,
Yield to the Will that sovereign is of ours
Their incorruptible allegiances.
And, heart! where thou art mercifully still
Under the unsophisticated sky,

Blessed by the company of wood and hill,
Cleansed by a blossom's scrutinizing eye,
Let us await His sign, and haply reach
The shrouded sense of life's oracular speech.

VI

I heard a Voice whose utterance includes
Thunder intoning a tremendous Name
Round altar-rocks in mountain solitudes
After the revelation of swift flame.

I felt a Silence where the silver-lipped
Wavering whisper of a falling leaf
Scrawled zig-zag on the air invisible script
That sighed a secret intimately brief.

Set thus between Thy Silence and Thy Sound,
O Master of the Word that speaks the whole!
I tread expectantly Thy sacred ground,
Hoping, in accents native to the soul
That listens through the body's brooding stance,
To catch the purport of Thine utterance.

Ascona, Switzerland.

VII

When I have watched Thee scatter through the grass
Autumn's mauve crocus, doubly treacherous
Where hungry jangling Alpine cattle pass,
Being not only fair but poisonous;

Then saw Thee conjure, for the watchful soul,
A poignant joy from sore necessity
Where fading life upon the plane-tree's bole
Pictures a loveliness of leprosy;
My heart with strong misgiving has been stirred,
Master of deadly beauty, beautiful death!
Lest I mishear Thy Voice that some deep word
Seemeth to say—then unsay what it saith;
Lest I misread the riddle of Thy Will
Wrought out through ill in good, through good in ill.

Geneva, Switzerland.

VIII

Oh! then, since dubious ill, precarious good,
Less in their deed than its direction lie,
And in bright reason's comprehending eye,
Beyond the hasty heart's refractive mood,
Fame lifts a laurel for the infamous
Who, though unwittingly, Thy Will subserve,
Provoking power in powerless limb and nerve
For life's ascension, sheer and perilous;
I ask not that, in the Jehovan way,
Thou shouldst make bare, O Lord! Thy righteous arm
Against those brethren who have offered harm
Unto their brethren. Rather do I pray
For the transfiguration of their sin
Through perfect Love's alchemic discipline.

IX

If leashed they must be, let it be with Light,
The burning lariat of Intelligence,
Leading from power's unsure omnipotence
To the staunch throne of friendship's touch and sight.
If Thou must curse them, be it with the curse
Of keen tormenting Beauty that shall fire
With virgin joy the ardours of desire,
And spirit-gold conjure from life's poor purse.
Burst, Lord! their hearts' clogged sluices with the flood
Of Love fulfilled in Magnanimity
That shall the bitter desert bid to bud
And laugh in blossomy sweetness that sets free
Odours and tinctures affluent to bless
The dwellers in the dreadful wilderness.

X

If Thou must smite them, smite them in the brain
With flagellations of relentless Thought
Eager as bees after a week of rain,
Till out of sunlit ecstasy is wrought
Sweetness and substance—exquisitely blent
From bloom and wing, confederate rest and flight—
For life embodied, blameless nourishment;
And for the heart, impeccable delight.

And on the shoulders of the powerful cast
The burden of high purpose bent to plan
Earth's future, fed but foiled not by the past;
To reinvest the sovereignty of man
With the free sceptre of the spirit's will
Life's royal admonitions to fulfil.

XI

Is it of deeper speech a paraphrase,
Bravely trumpeting triumph in defeat,
I hear the marching chanting ocean raise,
Though all its waves end as the sickled wheat?
Yea, though no ripened ear, from swath on swath
Tumultuously harvested, remains,
Thy pulse, that raised them, endless circuit hath,
Master of Life! through tideways of Thy veins.
Now is thought's trouble spume-washed from the brow,
Calmed by the clamours of the equinox
In whose defeat outrun by triumph Thou
Resolvest Thine æonian paradox
Of Death-in-life, with Life acclaimed supreme,
Outrunning Death around Thy spiral dream.

XII

Peace, then, O soul that mourned the spirit's loss
When sceptred power, renouncing reason, fell

Into Herodian pride too dull to tell
Barabbas from the bearer of a cross;
And sought to silence with jangle of jailers' keys
An orient hope—alas! a long-drawn dream—
That lips made eloquent with Freedom's theme
Would Freedom's call answer with splendid ease;
Peace, though power fell too spirit-prone to face
Woman's heroic new-enfranchised thought
Into the patriot's ardent purpose wrought,
With loftier answer than the felon's place;
And sought to still a wakening people's need
With statute-rhetoric framed by fear and greed.

About five thousand women were imprisoned in India during the political struggle of 1930 to 1933.

XIII

Hush, heart!—In circumstance ambiguous,
Where in the light the curd-white butterfly
Sheds a grey shadow as it blunders by,
And, moon-enchanted, rock is luminous,
Comes the bright hope that, past the sight of us,
Down ways our blind foretelling cannot spy,
Repentant Jove may leave his throne on high
To fraternize with freed Prometheus.

Yea, doth not, even now, to eyes that see,
The rod of iron serve Life's purpose well,

Being but shepherd-staff to Devaki
Seeking once more the consecrated cell
Where She at the sure hour shall bring to birth
The Holy Child that bringeth heaven to earth?

Vasudeva and Devaki, the father and mother of the foretold avatar, Shri Krishna, were imprisoned by King Kamsa in order to frustrate a prophecy of his overthrow through the coming Divine Child. The prophecy was not frustrated.

XIV

When in the phantom aeroplane of thought
I reach the mearings of a million years,
And ask for news of us, and our compeers
Whose deeds with such high destiny seemed fraught;
And, having vainly for remembrance sought,
Fly back from alien laughter, alien tears;
I ask my oracle, with lonely fears,
To what eternal purpose we have wrought.

Oh! then I shed the bonds of date and clime,
Seeing the answer shining on her brow
That greets the eternal in the heart of time,
Where life and love have their perpetual Now;
And festive flags and doleful drums retreat
With youth's false triumph, age's false defeat!

THE BELOVED CAPTIVE *

1. REVELATION

I

. . . And there She stood, where culmination sheers
Beyond all ends! Call her my Self, my Soul—
But God alone has record on His roll
Of Her high cognomen among Her peers.
Her hands were filled with fruitage of my years;
And on Her heart was transcript of their toll
Drawn starwards up my life's arterial bole
From transmutations of my smiles and tears.

Under a *chennar* in the Nishat Bagh
I woke. The tree was throbbing, leaf to root!
I heard him touch a string and hum a *rāg*.
Straightway I set my forehead to his foot,
Then lurched by hinting lake and gossiping streams,
Drunken with dreams that are not only dreams.

* Margaret E. Cousins served a month's imprisonment in Holloway Jail, London, in 1910, and a month in Tullamore Jail, Ireland, in 1913, during the woman's suffrage agitation. She was sentenced to a year's imprisonment in Vellore Jail, Madras, for publicly protesting against ordinance rule taking the place of the common law in India, on December 10, 1932, and released on October 21, 1933. These poems were written on Capri Island between December 1932 and March 1933 when the writer returned to India. The sonnets, "Revelation," are included because, though apparently unconnected with the others, they were written on the day of the imprisonment, and appear to have in their end lines some intuitive relationship to the event that was not known to the writer until next day by cable.

Drunken with dreams that are not only dreams
 I went. And the low earth became a height
 Vast with the purport of a moment's sight
 Beyond the edge of rumours and of gleams.
 I knew why man's imagination teems
 With Gods on thrones and Seraphim in flight;
 How, though in darkness, out of hidden light
 He frames his fabric of celestial themes.

Lift up the heart, then, lift it up as a bird
 Whose song is heard because of silences;
 Salute between our palms a present Third;
 Step with what Foot our foot accompanies
 Between the ambiguous deep and certain land
 Where Time and Timelessness walk hand in hand!

Chennar, the Indian maple. Nishat Bagh, the "Garden of Bliss" in Kashmir. Rāg (pronounced with broad ah), the Indian equivalent to the occidental scale in music. A memory of a summer visit.

2. THE TRIPLE VOW

Master Gitiades at Sparta built
 A temple to Athena, legend-hung
 In bronze; and carved her icon, fair among
 Fair forms, in cedar, ivory and gilt.

Then, that his soul in service might not wilt
In self-applause from silent substance wrung,
His heart into her canticle he flung—
A Dorian brook buried in history's silt.

And I, a new Gitiades in vows
Thrice-bound—to make my life my lady's fane
Worthy her worthy replica to house,
And to her spreading praise expand my strain,
Shall toil till speech goes dumb and sight goes dim
To make her shrine, her image and her hymn.

3. SPRING IN WINTER

Spring through December warmth unwonted pours.
White butterflies, bewildered by sorceries
Of sunlight, blunder by like spume of seas
That scatter softness round hard-visaged shores.
Ah! while such vernal prophecy implores
All things to joy, why, heart! this dark unease,
This inner listening for the grind of keys
Turned in the wards of unrelenting doors?

O heart! to be worthy of *her*, stand up in sight
Of all the world, and cry this confident thing:
“A seed of day, set in the soil of night,
Shall break earth's bondage at the touch of spring!”
Cry: “God, when He His labour had but begun,
To make a shadow had to make a sun!”

4. DOUBLE VISION

“Look, love!” I called: “that sky! We never knew
Sapphire so like to sapphire! No one said
The salvia could achieve such vivid red,
Or the plumbago be so heavenly blue!
See, sweet! that robin like a swallow flew!
Light is not light but lambent amber spread!
Oh! surely, underfoot and overhead,
The spirit of the season shimmers through!”

Christmas, and Capri! Love! I seek your hand—
And life turns hollow as a blighted tree!
Not here—but captive in a far-off land!
Why, then, that double rapture? Lustrosely
Insight, for the heart’s comfort, gives the clue,
That with the eyes of one I saw for two!

5. INCOMPLETE SPRING

Morning awoke in mood tempestuous.
Greyly the Mediterranean strove and seethed,
As whelps of wind, hungry and newly teathed,
Worried the olive trees in rowdy fuss.
But evening came serenely luminous;
And from the hill the wild narcissus breathed

Shrewd fragrance among violet shadows wreathed
With Dionysian convolvulus.
Stands the mimosa like a gold-robed queen
Wakened from winter's Herculaneum.
Light-edged on dark, the fresh acacia-green
Shades and shows out the red geranium.
All beautiful—but strangely incomplete!
Ah! yes, my heart misses its Marguerite!

6. LOVE'S HERESY

For my heart's sin, if it be counted sin
To hazard love's most holy heresy
In vowed itself not to the Lord but thee,
I have good hope I shall forgiveness win;
For I have seen how life in twain has rent
—To find completion more completely whole
Beyond the achievement of the separate soul—
The spirit's orient and occident.
And I have hope, that, for my sight's reward,
Our here disjoined unperfect hearts may reach
Through daily song's antiphonal accord,
One high, harmonious, consecrated speech;
And, when our love goes silent at its brim,
We may present one perfect heart to Him!

7. LOVE'S PERFECTION

I

Time was when love's young fancy, eager-hooved,
Sped loveward; but on joy's hushed margin learned
Love may not, though it may have purely yearned,
Lightly approach the mightily removed.
For onward, ineradicably grooved,
Go the splayed pathways of the heaven-externed,
Till fleshless purpose is in flesh discerned,
And spirit-service in the body proved.

Ah! though some recreance of incarnate will
In presence veils what I in absence know,
And exile asks, Love's mystery to fulfil; .
Still on towards Love's perfection glad I go,
Even through death, if death may be alone
My postern to the footstep of thy throne.

II

Even to death, if death lead to thy throne,
Gladly I go. Yet, since my days are spent
In banishment beyond thy stars' intent,
Life is but death by space and silence known.
Then, since no light hath death or life alone,
Here will I reach beyond their mere event;
Guess thy soul's stature by its pediment,
And, stretching unto thine, upraise mine own.

Come, love! let us outwit both life and death,
That are but lackeys to reality;
Outsoar the severance of blood and breath
Upon the parallax of love made free;
And, met within the firmamental deep,
The spirit's tryst in spirit-silence keep!

8. HOMEWARD BOUND

I

I stood where Cæsar stood to look towards Rome
When on his isle he yearned for Italy;
And San Michelé's sphinx looked out with me
Across the realms of undine and of gnome.
Then came a prow pushing a swath of foam
Towards India through the lustrous indigo sea
Under the swart Vesuvian canopy,
Bound for the land that is our spirits' home.

And suddenly the sun's last level beam
Made a gold gangway shipwards on the Bay;
And from the isle's jade shallows, in a dream,
My feet went forth impetuous Peter's way,
And caused the roster of that ship to err
Inscribing not a phantom passenger.

II

Bound for the land that is our spirits' home
 She passed. O love! we named at Rinkingpong
 Two trees for you and me, and watched the strong
 Cloud-horses rear around their hippodrome;
 Laughed at our image on a bubble-dome
 A stream down Dodabetta built of song;
 Yet felt through Earth one life-tide flow along
 And struggle starwards from a common loam.

Yes, Earth is home! Whether your mad monsoon
 Rant on the monstrous harp-strings of the rain,
 Or I go frenzied by a Bacchic moon;
 Above, our heavenly amplitudes remain,
 And underfoot, as Capri's cliffs I climb,
 Bones of our Earth stripped by the vulture Time!

*Rinkingpong is near Kalimpong, Lower Himalayas.
 Dodabetta is a peak of the Nilgiri Hills, South India.*

9. TRINITY

I

Set in a niche above
 The Middle Sea
 (A little shrine to Love
 Contrived by me),

Parnassian Pegasus,
Athena's owl,
Your face love-luminous,
Stand cheek by jowl.

II

Yet not until today
Was I aware
That in some hidden way
My hands had there
Combined of casual things
The trinity,
Of Beauty on the wings
Of Poetry,
Wisdom that would restrain
The crookéd-willed,
Goodness that is these twain
In deed fulfilled.

III

Thus, in a niche above
Virgilian sea,
Set in a shrine to Love
Devised by me,
Parnassian Pegasus,
Athena's bird,
Your face love-luminous
The binding third,

Are now made three-in-one;
And, of the three,
My praises swiftest run,
Beloved, to thee!

10. ARABESQUE

I

When I have scanned your pictured face
Enshrined in a most quiet place
Till visionary hands unroll
The splendid pageant of your soul
Whose passionate dream has turned to deed
In woman from subjection freed
Because of all you shared and bore
In Holloway and Tullamore;
I wonder now if then I saw
The orbit of your spirit's law
Cast round your dim evolving spheres
The arabesque of coming years;
Or if my fingers truly told
The count of your unminted gold
When the great signet of my dream
I set on its young laughing gleam.
That vernal day has withered by,
But left the pathways of the sky

Littered with rose-leaves though the rose
Has gone the way all flowering goes;
And what was done has less avail
For joy than telling of the tale.

II

For while I scan your pictured face
Enshrined in a most quiet place,
Once more I feel down starry ways
The throb of benedictive rays
Around your head converging fall
To make a nimbus on the wall
Where, in an Indian prison-cell,
You speak the silent oracle
Of passionate dream whose waking deed
Shall be a people purged and freed
To know the soul's authentic gains,
Self-breaking self-inflicted chains.
Yet, when the sceptred Will they bear,
You will adventure otherwhere,
Because of something in your eyes
That look from their own paradise,
And see in dark reptilian things
The bright incipience of wings,
And count the robes the heavens wear
Less than the Glory they declare.

III

So, as I scan your pictured face
That glorifies a quiet place,
Till visionary hands unroll
The splendid pageant of your soul,
And with majestic gesture draw
The orbit of your spirit's law
That casts around evolving spheres
Your arabesque of coming years,
I wonder now if proudly then
My harp shall resonate again
With echoes of your soul's emprise
When, from some stellar cell, your eyes
Will turn on the galactic blaze
Their unintimidated gaze,
And the starred heavens interrogate
For other worlds—to liberate!

SONG ON SONG'S LACK

My heart is in the south,
My face is to the north;
Therefore my famished mouth
Can utter nothing worth.

Lies the twain-cloven will
Responseless to the sky.
White-turbaned mountains fill
An unadmir ing eye.

Shepherds go shuffling on,
Whistling, their flocks to cheer.
This, and a chant at dawn,
I give but half an ear.

- - -

The whirling revelry
Of winds in misty shrouds,
The flashing colloquy
Of angry wrangling clouds,

Find not upon my mouth
Echoes of any worth,
My thought being in the south,
My body in the north.

Parting has song for some;
Distance a lyric dream:
My pilgrim harp is dumb
By a stone-harassed stream

That chants: "Through fen and field
Silent I slipped along:
Hear now frustration yield
The recompense of song."

Well, let who will employ
Their strings in praise of pain:
A jongleur I of joy,
I seek another strain;

And, lacking the delight
That mingles deed and dream—
Love's lyric touch and sight
That form and fire my theme—

My spirit's fingers slake
Their need on subtler wire,
And unheard music make
To stanch the soul's desire.

For song draws nothing worth
From the bewildered mouth
When life is in the north
And love is in the south.

Kangra Valley, Punjab, May, 1933.

YOUTH IN AGE

Because I was not wise
As other poets be,
And had not sense to see
Beauty in women's eyes
As Beauty's end and sum;
Nor gathered song to feed
Imagination's fire
With the incongruous weed
Of bodily desire;
But shrewdly sought to thresh
Out of the husks of flesh
Soul-profitable grain,
And shake from withering things
Unwithering winnowings,
My foolish feet have come
On unexpected pain.
For now, when years in front
Grow fewer than behind,
Song-comrades of my youth,
Re-living the old hunt
For life's futilities,
A grim new pleasure find,
That is to me denied,
In growling at the tooth
Of time and slow disease
Gnawing their wrinkling rind.

With Jeremian joy
They chant of things that cloy,
What dies and what has died;
While I, condemned to sing
What knows no perishing,
The winging, not the wing,
Monotonously go
My spirit-way. And so,
When age's breath benumbs
Feet that have grown uncouth,
And fingers are all thumbs;
Outcast, as man and boy,
From their lugubrious joy,
I shall pass through a door,
And perish in my youth—
At seventy-six or more;
Because I was not wise
As other poets be,
And, seeking but to see
In Beauty's glamorous eyes
Immortal enterprise,
Perversely chose to sing
What knows no perishing,
The winging, not the wing,
And sang in man and maid
Beauty that cannot fade.

THE ORACLE

To G.

“ . . . After a wavering time
I died from feet to head;
Then floated free to climb
Beyond long clouds of dread
Into a place that had
The sun and moon for doors;
Where Shapes, austerely glad,
On constellated floors
Wove in zodiacal dance
From threads of midnight and morn
The cradling circumstance
Of worlds that would be born.

And, passionately grave,
With eyes that held the sea,
One moved as moves a wave,
And held out hands to me,
White hands of Goddess-mould;
And in a voice that swelled
As ocean-deeps, ‘Behold!’
She said. And I beheld
—Raised from my knees by Her
As tangles on a tide—

What set my veins astir
With wonder. Side by side,
Close in a casket wrought
By Danaan smiths from spray
That moon- and sun-light caught,
A pearl and ruby lay—
Twin gems of heavenly mould
By their own radiance lit;
Enshrined, ensphered, ensouled;
Mightily exquisite;
Holy impregnable white,
Haughty implacable red!
‘ Goddess! unseal my sight,
My soul’s true sight! ’ I said.
Then She, in rhythmic speech
That the sea-murmuring had
Of surf along a beach,
Made me divinely glad
With the uncovered sense
Of cloud-wrapped mysteries
That through the brain condense
To words that might be these.—

‘ Who deem the Gods are dead,
Or born of haunted brain
Out of primeval dread,
Have their own Godhood slain,
Because their feet have flown

From ancient innocent ways,
Their eyes too guilty grown
Into themselves to gaze,
Lest on their darkness break
Sudden disturbing day,
And spirit-vision shake
Alliances with clay.

‘ Think not the suppliant fire
Was lit in vain to Powers
Fashioned of man’s desire:
Lo! that desire is ours;
Sparks of our noonless dawn
Dropped from ancestral skies
That we shall blow upon
Till flame to flame arise,
And the tumultuous
Dreams and desires of men
That wandered forth from us
Shall wander home again.

‘ O you whose feet have climbed
Our hidden citadel!
Time’s eye on the untimed,
Behold, remember, tell
How they who bravely win
High aspiration’s wings
Shall reach our heaven within
Far or familiar things.

‘ The Danaan Godhead we,

Shadowed in song and tale,
Who touch with ecstasy
The dreaming of the Gael;
Yet on dim banners, torn
Or lost in history's flames,
Age after age have worn
Famed or forgotten names
That still with chants divine
Can fill the opened ear:
The moon-white Niav mine;
My Lord's, the boundless Lir.
To us the Dagda gave
For mutual empery
The realm of tide and wave—
And seas within the sea,
Whose crests and hollows flash
Under celestial wind,
Whose crystal waters wash
Man's sullied heart and mind.
Age after patient age
We wait our witnesses;
And unto eyes grown sage
Our secret signs confess.
Mine is the ultimate calm;
Struggle and conquest his;
The pearl of pearls I am;
My Lord the ruby is.
These glyphs of Soul and Mind

In consecrated hands
Bear back to Earth, and find
A bard who understands.
He shall incarnate strong
Lovely detergent Powers
Through ceremonial song
That echo is of ours.'

With that the vision broke
In silence vastly sweet;
And slowly I awoke,
Reborn from head to feet,
Out of a place that has
Birth, death, for swinging doors;
Where Shapes ancestral pass
Along star-stippled floors,
Weaving in holy dance
From threads of night and morn
The cradling circumstance
Of worlds that will be born."

Danaan: "the people of Dana," the ancient Irish pantheon.
Dagda: the Irish All-Father.

Gael: here used for the Irish branch of the Celtic race.

Dublin 1904, Kotagiri, India, 1934.

SOUNDLESS MUSIC *

I

Stripped of circumstance and name,
All our stories are the same;
Symbolling the spirit's trial
Through assertion and denial,
In the tales of God and Man as
Chanted by the wise Puranâs,
Homer by the Grecian sea,
And the Irish shanachie.
For there is no plot but that
Spun by the Playwright when He sat
By the primal Wheel of Life
Out of strands of calm and strife,
Downward pull, ascensive curve,
Bovine torpor, artist-nerve,
Freezing hilltops, burning levels,
Dreams of gods, desires of devils,

* This poem should be read as an addition to "The Beloved Captive," telling how a musician met the deprivation of prison-life imposed by another musician, during the struggle for India's political freedom, and kept up her pianoforte practice by using the edge of her prison bed as an imaginary keyboard. The composition memorized was Scriabine's Sonate-Fantaisie No. 2 in G sharp minor.

The Puranâs are ancient Hindu stories that figuratively express cosmic and psychological ideas.

The shanachie is a traditional story-teller of Ireland.

The vina is a stringed musical instrument which stands to India as the harp does to Ireland.

The yogis of India usually sit for meditation on a deer-skin.

Joy that has riposte in pain,
Spur and countermanding rein,
Crystal vision, muddied wits—
All the pairs of opposites.
These rehearsed and garmented,
“The Play begins,” the Playwright said.

Forth they fare into the lists,
Life’s assigned protagonists;
Partners in the cosmic drama,
Born within the brain of Brahma,
Helping out each other’s karma;
And in Brooklyn or in Burma
Finding stage and audience ample
For their mumming. For example—

Two, whose thoughts on Duty run,
Willing, or unwilling, done,
Pause no moment to regret a
Stroke or thrust in the vendetta
Life splays outwards through its prism
In affined antagonism.
One of these, whose heart had long
Sentimentalized in song,
Now, in proud vicegerency,
Promulgates the stern decree
That with iron Ordinance
Would retard life’s quickening dance
In a people casting age,
Tasting freedom’s beverage:

While the other, born to be
Music's life-long devotee,
Breaks the paralysing ring
With intrepid challenging
Till she finds her doom—to dwell
Solus in a granite cell,
Exiled from her life's oblation,
And from music's ministration.

Yet, when day has clashed its door
In the hills behind Vellore,
And the warder turns the key
On the nightly mystery
Where her lamp-light sharply glows,
That unprisoned spirit knows
Through deprival secret bliss
Won by simple artifice,
Wit that bends the things that be
To the spirit's needs, as she
Feeds the famished music-mood
On imagination's food.
Seated lowly by her bed,
She, with swaying greying head
Timing hands that swing like sedge
Left and right along its edge,
Simulates the sister-fire
Paderewski strikes from wire,
Conjures heat without the flame,
And the soul behind the name,

Making soundless music there
For no earthly listener.

Now, upon that spirit-strain,
She has passed the prisoning brain,
Burst the bars of nerve and tissue,
Climbed the clouded peak whence issue
The primordial Ordinances
Of creation's circumstances,
Life's definitive designs—
Rhythms, gestures, tinctures, lines,
That, through mingled brain and heart,
Make the ritual of Art.
Thus absolved from hand and ear,
She through subtler sense can hear
Tones more tenuous than the vina's,
More ensouled than Palestrina's;
And can feel the wind that stirs
Round celestial auditors.

II

God from ecstasy profound
Wakes at an unusual sound,
Saying: "Not the wave that swings
Brazenly from Saturn's rings
Smitten cymbal-wise, or far
Chorusing of star and star,
Or galactic utterance,

Shatters my æonian trance;
But a speech that has no need
For the cry of winded reed,
Sob of string, or tympan's roll,
Being Music's naked soul
As within my heart it stirred
When I shaped the primal Word."

Then the Arch-Musician turns
Sight that through the systems burns
Questioning each singing sphere
For the sound that strikes His ear
Far more inly than the hymn
Of His flashing seraphim,
Being music that has found
Voice beyond the need of sound.

Forth the flaming Question sweeps;
Down the stellar stairway leaps;
On the fluctuating verge
Where the glittering systems merge
Tracks a gleam whose throb apprizes
Whence that soundless music rises
Flanked by those distracting stars,
Passionate Venus, puissant Mars.

Now the Question hides from sight
In the deep disguise of light,
Lest its inner radiance be
Darkened by mortality,
And the mist from human draf

Blur its heavenward heliograph;
Tacks from sky to sky until
Pilgrims to a snow-cowled hill
Where Himâlayan winters melt
Round the Yogi's sambur-pelt,
See a glory dropping sheer
From a cloud-built belvedere,
And in reverence profound
Put their foreheads to the ground.

When they cease to bend and pray,
Thunder thumping far away
Is the cipherless reply
Of a spirit vanished by,
Southwards to a place of palms,
Where escape from sunshine crams
Night with commerce, bandied words,
Chantings, cries of sleepy birds,
Mixed with music thinly clear
Only spirit-ears can hear
When the day has clashed its door
In the hills behind Vellore,
And the warder turns the key
On an artist's mystery.

There that embassage from Light,
Lucid Day to lurid night,
Diamond Skies to dusty ground,
Tracking that unbodied sound,
Masks its glory to engage

In celestial espionage;
Moves by metamorphosis
Into flames that shake and hiss,
Till it finds its fate—to fall
As a lamp-gleam on a wall,
And a poignant parable
Signal from a granite cell,
Where a woman's greying head
Sways beside her penal bed
As her hands, like wind-blown sedge
Glimmering on its iron edge,
Make the soundless music there
That awoke the Listener.

III

Thus (or haply otherhow)
Past the Pleiads and the Plough
Went the news, translating clear
For the universal Ear
Earthly jargon into pure
Heavenly nomenclature.

And (if mortal speech may tell
Mystery ineffable,
Like the saga that the sun
Tells to Jeans and Eddington)
Clouds that on the hills came down
Paraphrased a God-like frown

That, a cosmic instant after,
Melted in celestial laughter
As the Sun-God, rearisen,
Glorified a granite prison,
And, with eyes washed clean of malice,
Smiled on a viceregal palace.

For the Playwright, in the wings,
Watching how the Play of things
Moves through happiness or hurt in
Oscillations towards the curtain
That shall close the Story planned,
Raised a momentary hand
Thrilled with threat—but let it fall
As a lamp-gleam on a wall
Told how prison bars could be
Freedom's blind accessory,
By evoking in a cell
Soundless music's miracle
That had broadcast through the night
Mingled loveliness and light,
And beyond the planets seven
Mixed the souls of earth and heaven.

LONGWOOD SHOLA

Kotagiri, Nilgiris

Dawn, that calls the soul from sleep,
Brings the hungry bulbul's *yeep* . . .
Yeep . . . and that most final sound,
Peaches plumping on the ground
As his reckless slashing sabre
Ends a season's cosmic labour,
Laying low high fruitage ripened
For the early riser's stipend.

And, in truth, why should there be
Less than prodigality
When the wakening woods are choric,
And the firmament plethoric,
With the promise of abundance
After all things step to one dance
When the domineering rain
Drowns all else in its own strain?

Meanwhile, morning's invitation
Calls, through garden and plantation,
To the shades of Longwood *shola*,
Where the feet weigh scarce a *tola*
Poised on pathways thickly strown
With the leaves of seasons gone,
Stirring from deciduous death
Nature's vitalising breath.

Overhead slim branches swirl
As the bright-brown barking squir'l
Plays at gentleman-and-lady
To and fro, and shy cicadæ
Bandy wiry-shrill persuading
(*Twing twing TWANG*, such serenading!)
Universal invitation
Myriad-masked throughout creation.

Here and there fawn-flowered spirea
Stands as an inspired idea
In the brain of earth, a relic
Of the ministry angelic
From whose touch all beauty springs
Into joy of leaves and wings.

Even such rapture raises me,
All becomes a Mystery.
Water among pebbles tinkling
Needs no ceremonial sprinkling
Here to consecrate an altar,
Holy scripture, holy psalter.
Yea, past all dogmatic fission,
Here is ritual provision:
Multi-coloured cloths and bands,
Holy water for the hands
Flowing neither cold nor torrid,
Sacred ashes for the forehead
Gathered where the flame of day
Burns a glory into clay.

Yea, when hearts have learned the craft
That can break love's casual shaft,
And can rise in quiet woods
Into Love's immortal moods,
Such exalted tenderness
Bends the dreaming brow to bless
That the dragons of desire
Vanish in creative fire,
And futilities of thought
Scatter dustily to nought,
While the soul, in deep repose
Lifted into vision, knows
Spirit-freedom, loosed from sense,
Joy that needs no penitence.

Ah! such moments yet must fade
Till the soul all debts has paid
Unto darkness, and can look
On the earth as on a book
Shining, throbbing with the hymn
Of its heavenly paradigm.

Still, a reminiscent beat
Times a poet's homing feet
Where a mountain-forest river,
Swift on sand, round granite sliver,
Chants high deeds for panegyrics,
Lilts alluring themes for lyrics,
Under boughs that richly shed
Nourishment for heart and head,

Fancy's fruitage roundly ripened
As the early riser's stipend.

*Bulbul, not the Persian nightingale, but a favourite crested bird in India.
Shola, ancient forests on the Nilgiri Mountains, South India.
Tola, Indian unit of weight, three-eighths of an ounce.*

"IN THE HOUR OF THE PASSING OVER . . ."

To Humayun Mirza

In the hour of the passing over from night to day
My heart with the heart of nature moved in play;
In blind-man's-buff between the sightless and sight,
The dance of light with darkness, of darkness with light.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day
A breeze came up in the consequential way
Of youth on naive adventure—and passed me by
With a wistful, unaccomplished old-man sigh.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day
A crystal peace in folded creek and bay
And on broad-spread water, a light washed clean of
fire,
Reflected a sky of unfulfilled desire;

Till the mouths and hands of the wizards, wind and
dawn,

Transformed pure crystal to unreflecting fawn
That told how earth with water mingled lay
In the hour of the passing over from night to day.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day,
At the shake of dawn on its shoulder, a granite-grey
Right royal hill, that had slept the sleep of the proud,
Resigned its haughty dreams to a melting cloud;

A cloud that wrapped the dreams in a magian cloak
Invisibly, and, as waving camphor-smoke
Before an image of Godhead, faded away
In the hour of the passing over from night to day.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day
Two owls from somewhere to somewhere had some-
thing to say
Of night near gone that must wait for another night:
Meanwhile, snug sleep in the dark sweet heart of
light.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day
Two birds besprinkled the thinning darkness with spray
Of cascades of song to empty the heart's delight
In the dimness before the dumbness that comes
with sight.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day
I heard one Voice through myriad voices say;
“Give ear to the silent, as unto that which speaks.
All life with life a rich communion seeks.”

And as this was only saying that life is love,
A thing I have always known, like a mated dove
My heart to the heart of nature chanted this lay
In the hour of the passing over from night to day.

Thippagondanahalli, Mysore,

September 24, 1936.

A POETESS ATTAINS TWENTY-ONE

To Nathalia Crane

I saw the setting sun and rising moon
Look on each other through declining light,
And dying Day bequeath his golden boon
Changed into silver currency of night.
But after sleep and dreaming-time were done
Under night's rich star-teased coverlet,
I saw reversed in place the moon and sun;
And what had set now rose, what rose now set.
And both were beautiful alluring lies
To assuage the loneliness of time and space;
But past the need of uncorrupted eyes
That look undazed the eternal in the face;
That in your youth mine saw the ancient sage,
As yours, young wisdom masked in laughing age.

IN MEMORY OF GOVINDA KRISHNA
CHETTUR

I

This is the season when he raised his eyes
Unto the hills, and the dim *sholas* sought
Where winging singing meanings might be caught
And caged in lyrics beautiful and wise,—
A man who was a sonnet in disguise:
Body and brain the octave strongly wrought;
Soul the sestet that took his fledgling thought
And sent it singing somewhere in the skies.

He loved the light of dawn, the rainy gloom,
The tints wherewith the Nilgiri summer pied
Hill-ways and wood-ways; loved the cataract's
plume;
But, since his spirit was cerulean-skied,
Chiefly he loved the jacaranda's bloom
Of paradisal blue . . . And then he died.

II

He died when dreaming youth had made an end
Of nature's roseate subterfuge and lure;
And manhood, fixed in that which will endure,
Questions the dooms that life and death portend.

Life, proffering its ladder, said: "Ascend
To thine own eminence, assigned, secure,
Thou who art princely-statured, spirit-pure,
Noble as son, as lover, father, friend."

Ah God! when fullness empties, before time
Can ease the slow subsidence of the sea
Unto its natural ebb, what broken chime
Jangles the gloom, what subtle agony
Of vision quenched and uncompleted rhyme
Haunts the hard margin of mortality.

III

Yet may we the heart's indigence attire
In faith that Death no warrant hath to kill
Incarnate spirit's unaccomplished will
To reach perfection's purifying fire;
That with Great Life our little lives conspire
Through time a timeless Purpose to fulfil,
And from infinitudes of sky distil
The definitions of the heart's desire.

Oh! ends not all in the untoward event
That gives rich Death the richer half of life.
With his the hidden destinies are blent
Of all who shared his dreams with beauty rife,
Participants in calm accomplishment
Beyond the clamant borders of our strife.

IV

And if our eyes, grief-curtained, now are blind
To all save death's immobile mystery,
Yet may imagination soar and see
A poet, premature to heaven, find
Some lack of honey in unearthly wind,
Some tincture absent in immensity;
And high blue hills and a blue-blossoming tree
In hungry reminiscence call to mind.

Then, surely, God, in unfulfilled desire
That dead young poets bear across death's hour,
Finds hints how heaven may be shaped entire,
And life through lyric forms reach purer power;
And pours through earth-made moulds the
heavenly fire—
And lo! a jacaranda breaks in flower!

AGNOSIS

I

He watched a magian weave a potent spell
To guard a region sacred and apart;—
But lived to see uncharmed rebellion start
And lay in dust a ravaged citadel.
He heard a pythoness assuredly tell
Of Argo homing on a doubtless chart;—

And asked if Gods, or man's God-hungry heart,
Fashioned the dream that in confusion fell.

And when his own tranced ear grew almost glad
At phantom words that promised crown and throne
And orb and his own will's delight, a gad
Silenced the flattering Voice with doubt full-grown
That he, by self-made sorceries, being mad
For the divine, but divinised his own.

II

Rivers that heed not from what springs they start,
But only run and sing, would fain coerce
My blood with their wild race, and make my verse
Chant the sufficing dogma of the heart.
But in the brain the silent Watcher seeks
To know what Hands, outliving quick and dead,
Love's patina on life's rude metal spread,
And know what Voice beyond love's uttering
speaks.

Only in that discovery shall we,
Beloved! find sure retort when doubt assails
Of love that faileth as the body fails;
Thus meet corruption incorruptibly,
And step, beyond all planetary snares,
With confident feet up the sidereal stairs.

HAREM

I

Now that I have a while to spare,
And rhymes are dancing round my head,
Strange, for a theme, I do not care
If France go blue, or Spain go red;

And count of little consequence
What Gandhi says, or does not say,
Or Wilhelm's lost omnipotence,
Or the Dictators' ruthless way.

For all these things will gorge the heap
Time will into oblivion shove.
Only one theme its place will keep,
The ancient garbled theme of love.—

No! not the sentimental whine
With which the crooner smears the air,
Making of song a concubine,
And life a sly philanderer.

Oh! what has he of love to tell?
And what have they to tell of love
Who kneel not in its chasuble,
Nor in its holy ritual move?

Oh! I could croon, nor be believed,
Of love that makes their passion pale:
For I have loved, and love received
From women, in the heart's entail,

Not one by cancelled one, but six,
And all at once, and all the time:
Each my whole heart's imperatrix
In the precession of a chime:

Each over-toned and under-toned
By all the rest; so that no more
The heart of varied rapture owned
At thirty than at sixtyfour.

These will suffice as theme for song,
Now that I have a while to spare,
And for the kinks of right and wrong
Less than a withered rose-leaf care.

II

One is a whetstone making keen
The sickle of the reaping mind:
And one life's highways brushes clean
With music's paradisal wind.

One the dull air divinely shakes
With the soft stir of spirit-wings:
And one into her being takes
And gives the joy of natural things.

One can the veins to valour start
With chivalry for wrong's redress:
And one can pacify the heart
With love's all-saying silentness.

Day brings no ennui while the sun
From solstice unto solstice swings!
Nor night, while stellar athletes run
Around the planetary rings.

And while these women share my bread,
Small chance has love of going stale,
Or a spent heart to blur the head
With shreddings of illusion's veil.

Yet, though each silently resolves
A seeming separate intent,
Each the soul-sisterhood involves,
Subtly the same, though different.

Each in her own unique dear way
Looks through the same brown-brilliant eye
As when we wed, one April day;
And each on the one day will die,

And go where Light all shades will drown
(And may my death-day be the same!)
And God will crown them with one crown,
And call them by one flowery name.

And you who would my myth construe,
And learn love's never-ageing lore
Wherein the old remains the new,
And spending only swells the store,

Must ponder Ireland's trampled times,
When, to elude the invader's flames,
The patriot poets warmed their rhymes
With half a dozen worshipped names—

“Daughter of Sorrow,” “Little black Rose,”
And others that the heart-strings thrill:
Yet the one love of loves they chose
Was Ireland, Ireland, Ireland still!

Even thus my stainless loves I hymn,
Changing, unchanged, till song be done,
Since God, in a celestial whim,
Enshrined them in the form of one!

FOR A MARRIAGE ANNIVERSARY

I

Rikiu, the choice tea-master¹, for his prince
Laid out the daily ceremonial tea
Approached through morning-glories. But, lest he,
His lord, at too much loveliness might wince,
The master suffered not his blade to mince
Its whetted speech, and slashed the garden free

¹ Japan, sixteenth century.

Of blooms—but one to deck triumphantly
The tokonom¹, matchless then or since.

And as Noguchi² the quaint story told,
I thought of one (I cannot name his name,
Since modesty forbids) who did the same
In an invisible garden, to unfold
Before a princess, hour by common hour,
His heart's unchallenged and unwithering flower.

¹ *The corner in a Japanese guest-room for one picture, one vase, one flower.*

² *Yone Noguchi, the Japanese poet: a memory of 1919-1920.*

II

Had I but loved you in the way of men
Of sensual mind, and worshipped not your soul,
Well might I dread the lees in passion's bowl,
Their jaded palate wishing now was then.
But, love! your spirit's highlands glimpsed by dawn
Have still in dusk a distant virgin peak,
With hints of culminations yet to seek
Round crystal streams from cloud-hid fountains
drawn.

Oh! freed from tyrannies of touch and sight,
Yet from their sweetness feathering love's wing,
Shall my heart quail from our dear earth to spring
When you take off upon your heavenward flight?
Nay, but in highest heaven where you shall bide,
My soul, ascending, shall be at your side.

April 9, 1903-1937.

INVITATION AT SUNSET

Come where the coriander its aromatic breath
Exhales as a loosened spirit that seeks not the boon
of rest;
Where, high in the tamarind, mews like a kitten the
bird of death,
Its eye on the chittering weaver-bird that shrinks to
its nest.

Holy the daylight was. As holy shall be the dark.
Holy the place and the moment where life to life
now calls.

Holy the shrine-topped *kondas* that east- and west-
ward mark.

The Day-God's myriad births and myriad burials.

Shall we hold that the day's fulfilment is all on the
forehead bowed
Of Light by Darkness dethroned and humbled in
red retreat?

Nay, look you! above the standards of Night a
crimson cloud

Floats as a flag from a bastion denying the Day's defeat.

A million days . . . and a million . . . and the end
thereof who knows?

What will be, will be. What is, our lifted hands
acclaim.

Lost not in the sweet and splendid sadness of how
Day goes,
We lose not the joy of the triumph and wonder of
how it came.

*Kondas—Telugu, hills, Basanikonda and Maliakonda as seen from
Madanapalle on the southern Deccan.*

BEAUTY'S EXILE

Because I have loved Beauty for the sake
Of Beauty alone, nor ever yet mistook
For her true self the loveliest, wisest book,
Or anything the hand of man can make,
Or Kinchinjunga's peak, or Leman lake,
But all men's local zealotry forsook;
On every path for hint of her I look,
And from all boughs her rumouring blossom shake.

Traitor to all allegiances of mind,
Truant from every house and school and mart,
Apostate from all scriptures save her tome,
I follow Beauty down each veering wind,
From land, from faith from all but one great heart,
Exiled—with Beauty's universe for home!

COMMEMORATION ODE

*For the founding of a University **

I

Now the right royal hand, whose hero-stroke
From galling custom's yoke
A million souls into their selfhood freed,
Adds unto freedom freedom's deeper need
Of happy bondage to exalted thought
With living purpose fraught;
And high allegiance to the heart's desire
Passed through creation's fire
Into fair forms of substance well bedight
For usage and delight.

For now the hand that countless mouths have
praised

* The University of Travancore was founded by an Act passed by His Highness the Maharaja during his twenty-fifth birthday anniversary celebrations in November 1937. On the same occasion in the previous year he attained unique fame by throwing open the Hindu temples of the State to the large group of subjects formerly known as untouchables, thus not only breaking an age-long religious restriction, but opening the way to their social and economic elevation.

Travancore State is situated on the extreme south-west coast of India, between high mountain ranges and the Arabian Sea. It terminates at Cape Comorin, one of the most ancient and revered places of Hindu pilgrimage.

Shri Shankaracharya, the immortal Vedantic philosopher, was born in Travancore.

To us is raised
In summons to the excellent event
Of will and vision blent
To rear an edifice of noble dream
Into whose visionary arch and beam
Long generations patiently shall build
What for a people's good he well has willed;
And set, between the mountain altitudes
That dwarf all human feuds,
And the dispassionate seas that roll
Between the sacred Cape and southern Pole,
A nation's *alma mater* of body and soul.

II

Come then with confident hand,
Strong heart, unwavering mind,
To the exalted work; for they who stand
In lofty presences are lofty made
To face the task by destiny designed.
Let the foundations faithfully be laid
To anticipate the utmost need of Man.
Unto the deeply pondered plan
Let rise the walls of knowledge, bravely built
To join the floor, that coming feet shall tread,
With roof and carven gable overhead,
Where sun- and moon-light spilt

Shall be the symbols twain
Of radiant heart and comprehending brain,
In whose collaboration shall be wrought
Immortal monuments of skill and thought.

III

Bring learning, high achievement, honour. Bring
Wealth in all mintings. Yet, since these may cloy
In hands that only take
For taking's sake,
Bring most the gift of giving. Harvest joy
Comes not from gathering but from scattering;
And all the piled-up archives of all time,
Heavy with consequential pageantry,
Shall not outweigh some unborn poet's rhyme
That bears the mandate of eternity;
Or into fragments grind
One gem of truth from Shankaracharya's mind.

What if, despite the enterprising brain,
Knowledge may pass, wisdom shall yet remain,
Being of knowledge the undying soul
In whose control
Science, philosophy, religion, art
Shall bear their mutual part
Through agile brain, strong frame, keen finger-tip,
Glad service, reverent mood,

Vision profound,
To make the perfect comradeship
Of man and woman, spirit-free, yet bound
In various labour for the common good;
And set on some triumphal date,
From ridge to strand
Of this God-favoured land,
The earthly reflex of the heavenly State!

WINDOWS

Padmanabhapuram Palace, Travancore

Grieve not for gentle eyes
Dead centuries ago
That, living, to the skies
Gave back their twilight glow
When in the murmuring street
Below these latticed panes
Shrinewards a myriad feet
Followed the oboe-strains.

Grieve not for bright eyes closed
On skill and vision grown
So Godlike it imposed

Godhood on wood and stone;
And, under spirit stress,
Through wielded brush and blade,
To calling Loveliness
Lovely rejoinder made.

Grieve not for eyes bereft
Of art's reminding look,
Or what they, leaving, left.
Rather be glad they took,
From soul in substance wrought,
Joy that, remembered well,
Visible beauty brought -
To the invisible.

But somewhat sadly grieve
That, out of stuff and rule,
God's craft in men should leave
A Being beautiful,
Whose wonder should outlast
Lovers whose dimming sight
Unto their children passed
A lessening delight.

Ah! greatly grieve for these,
The disinherited,
Who, lacking will to seize
Art's affluence round them spread

(Heaven's cure for earth's distress),
Even in the holy place
Their own unloveliness
Transcribe on Beauty's face.

Grieve not for what they are,
But what they might have been—
Windows wherethrough a star
Should scan the earthly scene;
Mirrors that, though they break,
Should, holding memory well,
Visible beauty take
To the invisible.

Padmanabhapuram Palace, 33 miles south of the present capital of Travancore State, was for some time the centre of government. In 1750 the capital was moved to Trivandrum, and the palace, with its treasures of architecture, sculpture, wood-carving, mural paintings and ornamental windows, became comparatively unknown until recently.

MOUNTAIN MAGIC

Now the heart waxes wise,
Raised above duty's thrall.
From the aspiring eyes
Obscuring curtains fall.
The obvious earth and skies
Have grown symbolical.

Nature new magic weaves.
A necromantic wand
Lost graciousness retrieves
Where an ascetic hand
Is formed from bamboo leaves
Blessing the prostrate land.

Vertical laughter spills
Through horizontal wind,
Where, out of hooded hills
Dimly divined,
Rush silver-footed rills
Quiet to find.

Seaward they seek their end;
I, mine against the skies.
One shall towards peace descend,
And one arise;
Equally foolish wend,
Equally wise.

A WILD FLOWER

Here, in wide realms of space,
Three thousand feet enskied,
(Archæan hosting-place
Of mammoth petrified
In sleeping flocks—
Or so appear these rocks),
You stand, one tiny true
Home-keeping denizen
Of nature's rendezvous
Far from the haunts of men,
Bearing, no doubt, a name
Writ in sonorous Latin
That, could I whisper it,
Would make a little flame
Of fairy laughter flit
Across your eye's blue satin.

I have this morning seen
Foraging cattle pass
Head-down in quest of green
Undecorated grass;
Nor lift enquiring horn
Responsive to your spell,
But give you bovine scorn,
Being inedible.
Yet be not this deplored

As unrewarded waste:
Beauty that is ignored
Is beauty undefaced:
Beauty that men have praised
Is as the hunter's prize;
But I on you have gazed
With undesiring eyes.

If that be small reward
For your accomplishment
Of perfect loveliness,
Know that these other eyes,
That gaze on you,
Dark brown by blue,
Being as kind as wise,
Ungrudgingly accord
Praise like to that they spent
When, after days of stress,
Up through life's tangled weed
In my heart's garden sprang
A flower that sang.
Her praise is praise indeed.

If even that be less
Than perfect thankfulness
For perfect beauty given,
Then would I have you know
God's laud is in that glow

On breaking mist
Most eloquently scriven.
Yet may it chance
That your swift subtle glance
Signals, in cryptic speech
Whose esoteric gist
My inner ear can reach,
That, since your flowering is
Seen end of unseen cause,
Climax decreed,
You have no need
Of her or my applause,
Or even His,
Having supreme reward.
In your own life's accord
With oracles that run
Through sod and sun,
Setting the law in each
Of its authentic speech—
Even as I too make
This song for Song's high sake.

Ponmudi, Travancore.

A HILL-GARDEN

I

There was a garden set
In a high place
Where earth and heaven met
In mutual grace

Bestowed on soil and sun,
That they fulfil
The purposes of one
Creative Will.

But there, for year on year,
No back had bent
To sweep the sun-ways clear
For life's intent;

No hospitable foot
Had lightly packed
Round starveling stem and root
What most they lacked—

Essence of crumbled stone
And rotted rose;
The richness death alone
On life bestows.

So, lest the draught distilled
From seasons shed,
And new life unfulfilled,
Go doubly dead,

Lacking the sharing lip,
The mingled breath,
The fruitful comradeship
Of life and death;

That lost accomplishment
She might retrieve,
God to the garden sent
The gardener, Eve,

To link the competence
Of source and need,
And wake the slumbering sense
In slip and seed;

And spread with fork and hone
And pruning knife
The riches death alone
Bequeathes to life.

Then, after days of sun
And nights of shower,
Eagerly one by one
Bud, leaf and flower,

Touched by a power benign,
Gave without stint
Wonders of shape, design,
Perfume and tint,

So richly interfused
That, eyes aslant,
Adam, observing, mused,
And made a chant

II

About a garden set
In a soul-place,
Where love and beauty met
In mutual grace

Of heart and mind that run
Fain to fulfil
The utterance of one
Expressive Will;

Where, for the banishment
Of thoughts that grieve,
God to that garden sent
The gardener, Eve,

Under whose quickening touch,
From music's ground,
Broke into being such
Blossoms of sound

As, in the space between
Their witherings,
Hold raptures felt and seen
In buried springs;

And, cancelling death's date,
To life rewake
The lovely things the great
Musicians spake.

And there, like migrant birds
In vocal throng,
Adam in winging words
Chanted a song

That in each passing breath
Knows and avers
The affluence that death
On life confers.

Kotagiri, Nilgiris, India, Spring 1940.

ENTHRONEMENT

Clouds like engraved ivories
Sidle across a sapphire sky
That domes a place of flowering trees,
Green lawns, and brown earth far and nigh,
And murmuring galleries
Packed with the humble and the high.

They gaze on a palatial space
Where champing horses, marching men,
Tense-bodied wrestlers, take their place
To wait the stellar moment when
A king of ancient race
Shall mount an ancient throne . . . And then—

As that spare form, on brown bare feet,
Seeking to win from Powers benign
What for his people is most meet
For soul and body's high design,
Ascends the lion-seat,
Blending the human and divine—

A sudden tension disenchains
An inner flash that blinds the sun's;
And, nearer than the trumpet-strains
. And crashing of saluting guns,
Along my burning veins
A throb with Godlike import runs,

And urges my translating cry:
“Oh! that Our world might enter theirs!”
And to my opened inner eye
Unveils the cure for human cares,
The secret wherein lie
The dissolutions of despairs . . .

The apocalyptic moment ends,
And sight and sound resume their sway.
But he, enthroned in calm, transcends
Men's clamours in the royal way;
And in soul-purpose bends
The ritual of night and day.

And while the multitude applaud
The elephant's fastidious foot
And flower-salaam, the horse's nod,
He lifts his right hand to salute
With reverence the God
Incarcerated in the brute:

And in that gesture augurs days
(O yearning Gods, how far? how dim!)
When man on man and beast shall gaze
As on incipient seraphim;
And life in answering ways
Shall yield her plenitude to him.

On the first day of the Hindu autumn festival of the Dasara, His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore reascends an ancient venerated throne known as the lion-seat amid the plaudits of the great multitude in the grounds of the palace and in the galleries of the immense open durbar hall. To the people the "ten days" (dasara) of the festival are crowded with religious ceremonial and social entertainment. But to the Maharaja it is a period of asceticism and worship directed towards the spiritual and material welfare of his people, in whose eyes he is the representative of Deity. During the processions past the throne, an immense caparisoned elephant and a white horse offer salutations which His Highness acknowledges. A reminiscence of His late Highness' last Dasara, October 1939.

FRESHETS

I

From distant hills, in summer drowned,
The river rushed by you and me,
And in an ecstasy of sound
Leaped straight into the sea.

With faith as firm and equal mirth
May you and I, in time to be,
Leap from our ledge of crumbling earth
Into the Spirit's sea.

II

Far in the hills the lightnings gleam,
And heavy clouds their burden shed.
Here all is peace—yet see the stream
Rise roaring in its bed.

Perhaps the heart's tumultuous moods
As lofty ancestry may claim,
Where, in the soul's high solitudes,
The Spirit speaks in flame.

*Connemara, Ireland, 1905.
India, 1940.*

BEFORE AND AFTER

I

In clouded moonlight, filmy, silver-grey,
Seeking to make the marriage-song of Lir,
Urged by desire and stultified by fear,
I gazed from Sandymount on Dublin Bay.
From near and far two voices seemed to say,
One: "Your poor song is but a splintering spear,"
And one: "True song can call the spirit near."
Between the two I spun as wind-whipped spray.

I cried: "O sire of Manannan, a sign;
A brother-hail from some tall spirit-ship
To scatter doubt!" Swift as the curlew's dip,
Unseen, unheard, there was a splash of brine,
There was a tang of ocean on my lip,—
And in my head rose rolling line on line.

Lir is the Irish Neptune.
Ireland 1905, India 1938.

II

Inland from phosphorescent Indian shoals
That, for a wandering bard, a moony night
Laid at his feet, though no moon was in sight,
Hear now the black-and-golden orioles
Behind the rear-guard of retreating dark
Whistle their burnished phrases of delight.
Calling the world, in death's and hate's despite,
The victory of life and love to mark.
In confident orient magnificence
They clinch the speculation of a bird,
Dowdy but sweet, in glades of memory heard
Where, for long winter's thirsty recompense,
Still, as of old, the heathy summer spills
From its deep vats wine-stains on Wicklow hills.

Ireland 1908, India 1938.

III

Not now, as once through swift salt-savour'd rain,
He watches men and women slowly pass
With "God and Mary to you" to early mass
By fuchsia hedges in a Kerry lane.
Here, by the azure-eyed convolvulus
He listens to loud ceremonial chants
Surging around precipitous elephants
When men in season grow God-amorous.
By other paths on the same quest he goes;
Not to the rainy peak that Patrick trod;
But hearing in strange speech the name of God
Along the selvage of Himâlayan snows,
Where, in the chaste colossal quietude,
Fades from the heart and brain the human feud.

Ireland 1909, India 1939

REVIEWS AND
BIBLIOGRAPHY

REVIEWS

Rarely is it the fortune of the reviewer to meet with verse of such distinction. *New Ireland Review*

* * * *

His extraordinary imaginative powers, his skill in painting word-pictures, and the glamour which he throws over all are marvellous. *Irish Independent*

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Artistically Mr. Cousins can only be put below the two-leaders of his movement (Æ and W. B. Yeats). He has the calm intensity, the subtle strangeness of simplicity, which seems to be as easy as breathing to an Irish poet. *The Nation, London*

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A new pleasure on each page. *Glasgow Herald*

* * * *

Many an English poet would willingly sacrifice a page or two of his consummate verse if he might but catch the charm of such a lullaby as this. . . . *The Times, London*

* * * *

Of the founders of the Irish poetical revival, James H. Cousins was one of the best known . . . his spiritual quest has been unchanging. The poet moves among immortal themes. *Times Literary Supplement, London*

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The combination of a leading Irish literary figure with the ripe thought of India has produced . . . an exceptional beauty of form and liveliness of imagination. *The Personalist*, University of Southern California

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In this poem ('Bubble-blowers') we hear almost all the modulations of the poet's voice: the joy in reality, in which every object becomes a symbol of something higher; love for nature, yet a longing for communion with that which is behind nature; childlikeness and philosophical speculation; a light irony which plays about things ponderous; and always the deep organ-tone of devotion. *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, Holland; Augusta de Wit in a special review-article

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A Wandering Harp places him in the front rank of contemporary poets in the English Language. *Journal de Geneve*, Switzerland

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Not only is Mr. Cousins' poetry considerable in bulk, but it has a remarkable and indeed unique quality of faith which marks it off from all contemporary English poetry and which gives it an absolute and permanent value. . . . In an age of doubt, negation and despair, this poet *will* assert the permanent and positive. . . . In the second sonnet in 'Agnosis' Mr. Cousins puts forward his true claim to greatness . . . the second in the series ('A Marriage Anniversary') is a thing of exquisite loveliness. K. S., *The Hindu*, Madras, India

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